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MADONNA

DRAKE

'EMPIRE'

KID ROCK'S REDNECK GLORY

LIL WAYNE'S WAR

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RS1230 "All the NEWS THAT FITS"

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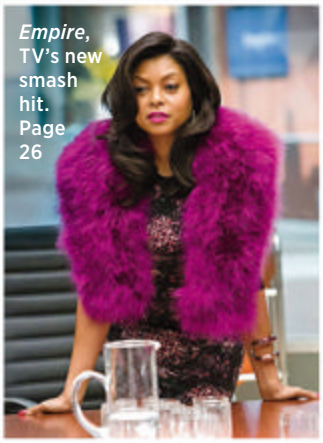

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ON THE COVER Madonna photographed by **Mert Alas & Marcus Piggott**.

BOTTOM FROM LEFT: GILBERT CARRASQUILLO/GETTY IMAGES; CHUCK HODES/FOX

Photograph by Peter Yang

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FEATURE

JIMMY PAGE REVISITS 'PHYSICAL GRAFFITI'

Led Zeppelin's sprawling masterpiece grew even bigger with a new deluxe edition containing seven unreleased cuts. We spoke with Page about writing songs with drummer John Bonham, the evolution of tunes including "Kashmir" and "In the Light," and the new project he's working on.

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THE DIRTY 20: RAUNCHY LPS

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Shane McAnally is country's hottest songwriter, writing hits for everyone from Kacey Musgraves to Kenny Chesney. We spoke with him about the stories behind the smashes.

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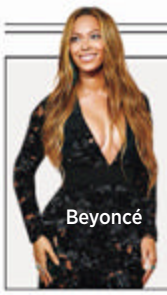
The annual March music event in Austin will feature performances by Best Coast, the Zombies, Will Butler and more. Check out our complete guide to the madness.



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CORRESPONDENCE LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE

Mr. Lonelyheart

WATCHING SAM SMITH'S ASCENT up the pop charts has been thrilling. His appearance on the cover of ROLLING STONE is well-deserved ["The Liberation of Sam Smith," RS 1228]. While he may consider Adele to be his Michael Jackson, many of us consider him to be ours.

Wanda Meris, via the Internet

IT'S GREAT THAT WE HAVE an openly gay pop star in Sam Smith, but I agree with him when he questions whether straights are held under the same sexual-preference microscope. I'm glad that Patrick Doyle's nice profile focused on Smith as a self-effacing man who just happens to be able to sing the roof off the house.

Shayna Lee Woodard
Via the Internet

NOT THAT I CARE WHO SHOWS skin and who doesn't, and I'm sure Sam Smith would prefer to be known for his work and talent, but his cover photo is very classy.

Theresa Sloan
East Wenatchee, WA

POTUS vs. GOP

TIM DICKINSON KNOCKED another one out of the park ["The GOP's Hit Squad," RS 1228]. These current GOP leaders, if they can even be called that, are hellbent on destroying the progress the president has made. Ordinary Americans recognize the wonderful job Obama has done despite facing unprecedented obstruction since the first day of his presidency.

Jeff Swanson, Everett, WA

AS A LONELY DEMOCRAT IN heavily Republican West Michigan (80 percent right-wingers in recent elections), I was already leery. When "those guys" won the majority in Washington recently, I moved on to scared. After reading Tim Dickinson's "The GOP's Hit Squad," I am now absolutely frightened.

Lee Lamberts, Jenison, MI

Police Dept. Gone Wild

For RS 1228, Nick Pinto traveled to Albuquerque to report on the city's notorious police department ["When Cops Break Bad"]. RS readers, many from New Mexico, wrote in.

ALBUQUERQUE'S PD IS fully out of step with our community. How chilling that 28 of our citizens were killed by cops in the past five years, but that until last month, not one officer has been held accountable. The brutal assassination of James Boyd changed that – sadly because it was caught on tape. Thank you for an enraging story about the systemic abuse of power.

Marisa Vasquez
Via the Internet

NICK PINTO DID A good job with this piece. The psychological demands of being a cop call for above-average impulse control. Police academies use psychological vetting to figure out who can be trained for policing. As Pinto revealed, the APD's psychological-vetting process was loosened as the force was grown. It's predictable, then, that problems with psychological fitness escalated in the ensuing years.

Pierre Bierre, Pleasanton, CA

IT'S CRIMINAL NOT TO hold our police to the highest standards. We all pay – in lawsuits, or with our lives.

Eddie Shehan, via the Internet

PINTO'S GOOD ARTICLE doesn't go far enough. In some sections of Albuquerque, citizens don't call the cops; in others, the cops are the worst criminals on the street. Not all officers are bad, but enough are that they get tarred with the same brush. Allowing cops to act with impunity isn't policing.

S. Mckenzie, via the Internet

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU shine a light on what's been happening here. How to overhaul a force that is corrupt from top to bottom is daunting, but it must be done. We can't go on like this just because everyone thinks, "Their teachers are meth kingpins, so what's the big deal?"

Bill Royal, Rio Rancho, NM

MEMO TO ALL POLICE, anywhere and everywhere: If bad cops are cowards, what are silent cops?

Donna Sande
Albuquerque

UP NORTH, WE HAVE VIABLE alternatives to the two-party system, including the Greens. Until the U.S. establishes third parties, especially ones whose members aren't millionaires, you'll be pressing the repeat button on an unhealthy, polarized political process.

Richard Mason, Ontario

Beck's Big Win

ERIC CHURCH LIKES BECK? Church surprised me when he picked *Morning Phase* to win the Album of the Year Grammy ["Grammy Showdown 2015," RS 1228]. It was my pick too, but who knew a country guy would have such alt taste? Great win for a brilliant dark-horse record.

Eric Arden, via the Internet

Aussie Upstart

UP FROM DOWN UNDER AT last ["Courtney Barnett: A Wit Is Born," RS 1228]. For a long stretch, we had Barnett's "Avant Gardener" on repeat – glad you guys are giving her some ink. Barnett is clever, yes, but she's also a songwriter who really knows her way around classic pop.

Meg Nolan, via the Internet

The Churchgoer

THE LUCK OF THE IRISH: Taylor Swift catches Hozier's Nashville set, falls in love with his music, and the rest is history ["Hozier's Unlikely Rise," RS 1228]. To anybody thinking Hozier is the next Gotye one-hit wonder, check out the rest of his awesome album.

Shane Hayes, via the Internet

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WHEN YOU'VE PUT EVERYTHING ON THE LINE TO BREAK INTO THE BUSINESS AND MAKE YOUR BIGGEST DREAMS COME TRUE, YOU LEARN WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE SERIOUSLY GOOD MUSIC.

KIP MOORE

Hot off the heels of his first major tour with a successful debut album under his belt, country singer-songwriter Kip Moore has learned first-hand what it takes to make seriously good music. We caught up with the Georgia native who revealed the inspiration behind his latest hit, his biggest accomplishment as a musician and why he thinks Bourbon and country music make a great team.

How do you measure whether a song is seriously good?
I know if a song is seriously good if I'm still proud of it after the fifth listen. If a song still inspires me and the melody still grabs me after four or five listens I feel like I might be onto something.

Where did the inspiration for your new single, "I'm to Blame" come from?
After the success of the first record I had a lot of people trying to steer me in a certain direction. This was my way of saying 'Everybody back up for a second, I'm going to do things this way.' I think that fans can get fooled for a while, but if you're not honest about what you're writing they're not going to fall for it for long.

What has been your greatest accomplishment so far?
Definitely headlining our own major tour. What makes it so important is thinking about how we made it through the grind as a band and stuck together. So often Nashville is a revolving door of players and bands who are constantly changing, but we are still the same guys.

"(Bourbon)... is synonymous with everyday hard work and blue-collar life and that's what country music is."

Have you had any memorable fan encounters?
I had a U.S. Marine come up to me out west and he told me the "Up All Night" record was the only thing that kept him sane while he was in Afghanistan. He said he would listen to that record over and over and that meant so much to me. It's crazy when you realize that your songs are touching someone else's life all the way in Afghanistan – it's a powerful thing. It's scary that your words carry so much weight, but it gives what I'm doing meaning and that's why I want to do this.

How do you rock out after a show to keep the party going?
After every show we set up a tent outside the bus and have our Christmas lights hanging and a big speaker. We pour some drinks and play and it makes us remember why we started doing it – for the love of the music. We are a band of brothers and you can truly see we're all having a blast on stage. It's because we stay close and have those moments together.

Bourbon and country music go hand in hand. Why do you think they work so well together?
I think living that slow paced, country lifestyle is just the kind of thing where at the end of the day you have a few sips of Bourbon and you sit back and relax. It's synonymous with everyday hard work and blue-collar life and that's what country music is.

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THE PLAYLIST

OUR FAVORITE SONGS, ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW

1. Kendrick Lamar

"The Blacker the Berry"

Kendrick's subtle, impassioned new single reaches a lyrical level few MCs can come near, taking aim at racism and his own doubts: "Why did I weep when Trayvon Martin was in the street?/When gangbanging make me kill a nigga blacker than me?"

2. Bob Dylan

"That Lucky Old Sun"

Shadows in the Night, Dylan's great new set of pop standards, peaks with its final track: this tenderly crooned, richly orchestrated take on a classic melody.

3. Jack Ü feat. Kiesza

"Take Ü There" Missy Elliott remix

This track from Diplo and Skrillex's EDM superduo was already pretty rave-tastic – then Missy took it to club heaven with some freaky, funky guest vocals like only she can do.

4. Speedy Ortiz

"Raising the Skate" ▼

"I'm not bossy, I'm the boss," Sadie Dupuis reminds us on this perfect whirl of sharp words and quiet-loud guitar snarl. We can't wait for the Massachusetts band's new LP.

5. Florence and the Machine

"What Kind of Man" ▼

How Big How Blue How Beautiful (due out in June) will be their first LP in four years. The comeback single makes up for lost time, with Florence Welch's powerhouse vocals ringing out over a backdrop of big, loud, bluesy guitar.

6. Blur

"Go Out" ▲

The Magic Whip (due in April) is the Brit-pop act's first LP since 1999 with guitarist Graham Coxon. This tune proves that Damon Albarn's wry lyrics and Coxon's spiky feedback are still a killer combination.

7. Charli XCX

"Shake It Off" ◀

When Charli hit the BBC recently, she gave Taylor Swift's bubbly pop smash a fresh punk bite. Find it on YouTube and you'll be play, play, playing it all day.

EXPERT OPINION

Steve Earle

We asked Earle – who just released a great new album, *Terraplane* – for his thoughts on five songs.

OLD

Kris Kristofferson
"The Silver Tongued Devil and I"
This came out the year I dropped out of high school. It's every bit as important to me as any Beatles, Stones or Dylan record.

Joan Baez
"Love Is Just a Four-Letter Word"
Joan Baez is one of those singers that you can only hope and pray sings one of your songs. I love the record this is from, *Any Day Now.*

The Clash
"Spanish Bombs"
This is a weird one for me. Joe Strummer hated me. I think he misunderstood my song "Johnny Come Lately." But "Spanish Bombs" is great.

NEW

Laura Marling
"Short Movie"
I've heard her name, but never her music before this song. I like the urgency to it, and it's really intimate. I'm impressed.

Gary Clark Jr.
"Three O'Clock Blues"
B.B. King made this song his own when he recorded it. But I'm glad to see Gary take the bull by the horns and tackle such a classic.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: SLAVEN VLASIC/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY HIATT/GETTY IMAGES; DANIEL TOPETE; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE; ANGELO MERENDINO/GETTY IMAGES; TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES; DAVE J. HOGAN/GETTY IMAGES

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PROFILE KIM GORDON'S NEW NOISE PG. 18 | **Q&A** NOEL GALLAGHER PG. 22

Rock & Roll

Lil Wayne Goes to War

Rap star sues his label for $51 million, plots free album

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

On December 4th, Lil Wayne hit send on a series of tweets that rocked the music world. "I am a prisoner and so is my creativity," he wrote, blaming Cash Money Records and its co-founder, Bryan "Birdman" Williams, for refusing to release his long-delayed album *Tha Carter V*. "I want off this label and nothing to do with these people."

Eight weeks later, the 32-year-old rapper dropped another bombshell. In a 21-page document filed in a federal court in New York on January 28th, Wayne sued Cash Money for $51 million, alleging a wide range of financial misdeeds – including a claim that the label owes him $8 million for *Tha Carter V* under a 2012 deal that guaranteed a $10 million advance per album. (Cash Money reps did not respond to requests for comment.)

Lil Wayne has been one of Cash Money's flagship stars since he signed with the label at age 12, and for years he saw Williams as a father figure, frequently dubbing himself "Birdman Jr." on record. But that relationship has broken down, perhaps irreparably: Wayne says that he and Birdman are no longer on speaking terms. "I have no words," he tells RS. "I'm supernumb to it, to tell you the truth."

It's 2 p.m. in Miami, and Wayne is just waking up when he calls. He's understandably prickly about [*Cont. on 12*]

BLUNT WORDS Wayne says he's no longer on speaking terms with his former mentor Birdman.

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DOCUMENTARY

Inside the Campus-Rape Crisis

Stunning documentary shows how universities cover up sexual-assault cases

A FEW YEARS BACK, KIRBY Dick was having dinner at a prestigious liberal-arts college when an administrative official timidly raised her hand and unwittingly launched the filmmaker on his next cinematic crusade. Dick was at the school for a screening of *The Invisible War,* his documentary about rape in the military. He wasn't surprised by what the faculty member told him – that rape was a problem on campus – but by the way she said it. "There was a certain amount of fear in her voice," Dick says. "I was like, 'Really? In this liberal institution you are afraid to speak about this?' That told me that there was a real, significant problem."

Dick's latest film, *The Hunting Ground,* tackles not just the epidemic of rape on campus – the film notes that more than 100,000 college students will be sexually assaulted in the coming year – but also the way in which universities cover it up. "By not supporting students who come forward, by not believing them, by suggesting that somehow their rape was their fault, by not properly investigating the crime, administrators compound survivors' angst and trauma," Dick says. Simply put, ignoring or undermining survivors keeps rape stats low, which not only helps maintain the school's brand but also protects fundraising (a large percentage of which comes from Greek alums or is tied to the performance of sports programs). Which explains why one administrator allegedly dealt with a complaint by comparing rape to football ("If you look back on the game, what would you do differently in that situation?"), and another reportedly told a victim to "just drop out until everything blows over." Just how bad is the problem? From 1996 to 2013, the 259 reported sexual assaults at Stanford led to only one expulsion, according to the film.

AN EPIDEMIC (1) Accused rapist Jameis Winston. **(2)** Kirby Dick, whose film features interviews with dozens of survivors, including activists **(3)** Andrea Pino (left) and Annie Clark.

At the heart of *The Hunting Ground* are the stories of the survivors, each of which is hauntingly similar in its salient points: sexual violence followed by callous dismissal at the hands of a much-trusted institution. Erica Kinsman goes public for the first time to describe her alleged rape by Florida State quarterback Jameis Winston before he even played his first official game. It took nearly a year for her rape kit to be tested, and although Winston's DNA came back as a match, no charges were filed. Winston, who maintains his innocence, won a Heisman; Kinsman dropped out.

Thankfully, *The Hunting Ground* also documents the rise of a heroic student-led movement to, as one survivor puts it, "force or shame [schools] into doing the right thing." After a fruitless attempt to change UNC-Chapel Hill from the inside, Annie Clark and Andrea Pino now show survivors from schools across the country how to file federal Title IX complaints, which argue that allowing perpetrators to remain on campus creates an environment where all students do not have equal access to education. "Close to one in five women are being sexually assaulted on campus," says Dick. "This may be the most important issue these schools should be facing." With more than 90 colleges now under Title IX sexual-violence investigation – and thus at risk of losing their federal funding – maybe soon they will.

ALEX MORRIS

LIL WAYNE

[*Cont. from 11*] discussing the lawsuit. "That's a legal matter, homeboy," he says. As for the "I am a prisoner" tweet, he tries to play it off with a joke: "I love being a prisoner in some pussy. That's what I meant." But he admits the legal wrangling weighs on his mind. "I'm human," he says. "But it's nothing that a good blunt can't cure."

Wayne says *Tha Carter V* is finished but on the back burner. "It's superdone," he says. "Cake baked, icing on top, name on top, candles lit. I would have released it yesterday if I could. But it's a dead subject right now."

In the meantime, he's been putting in 12-hour studio shifts on an all-new project: the cleverly titled *The Free Weezy Album,* which he plans to release for free in March. "I'm working on it every day, man," he says. "I guarantee it's going to be dope."

The album will follow another unconventional release from Wayne's circle: *If You're Reading This It's Too Late* (see review, page 58), by his labelmate and protégé Drake, which went up for sale online in mid-February with no warning. The project, which includes a few lyrical shots at Cash Money, sold nearly 500,000 copies in its first four days. "Now anybody could put out a new song on the Internet and it could become the hottest thing ever," Wayne says. "When I was starting, you couldn't do that. But that's wonderful – the game is wide open, and my job is just to stay vital."

Wayne keeps up with younger artists – "I like Rae Sremmurd and Migos," he says – but after nearly 20 years in music, he feels his age is starting to show. "Sometimes I don't know what the hell they're talking about on Instagram," he says with a laugh. When that happens, he turns to his 16-year-old daughter, Reginae: "I had to call her, like, 'What the hell is "on fleek"?'"

Last year, Wayne hinted that he might be ready to retire from music, but he says he's got other ideas now. "I've thought about it," he says. "But for a person like me, it's hard to do." He hopes to spend much of 2015 touring and perhaps recording overseas. "And I might give y'all three new kids from four different women," he adds. "You know how I do it."

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PROFILE

Randall Park's Long Road to Comedy Gold

The 'Fresh Off the Boat' star on sitcom success and playing Kim Jong-un

When Randall Park was first approached about starring in a sitcom called *Fresh Off the Boat*, he was skeptical. The show involved a Taiwanese family struggling to adjust after moving to Florida; the last sitcom with an Asian cast was Margaret Cho's *All-American Girl*, more than 20 years ago. "There are many theories as to why that is," says Park, a 40-year-old Korean-American, "but in simple terms it's just racism."

ALL IN THE FAMILY Park with Constance Wu on *Fresh Off the Boat*. Right: As Kim Jong-un.

But not only did *Fresh Off the Boat* get picked up by ABC as a midseason replacement, it also became a surprise hit, averaging 8.4 million viewers per episode. The show, set in 1995, is based on a memoir by chef and restaurateur Eddie Huang. Park, who plays Eddie's father with great warmth and a light comedic touch, says he sees a lot of himself in young Eddie – Park also grew up loving hip-hop and struggled to fit into a largely white culture: "People would call me Bruce Lee or Jackie Chan or whatever popular martial artist there was at that time. I also remember the other kids at the lunch table freaking out when I brought in Korean food."

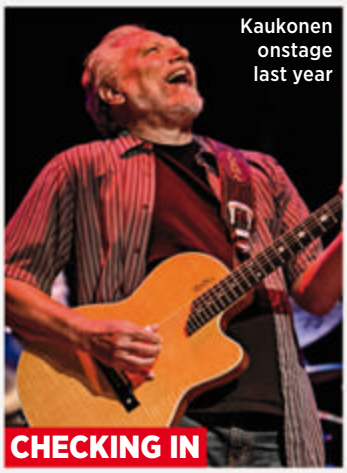
Park was raised in L.A. by strict immigrant parents who wanted him to be a doctor or a lawyer. He began acting in college, and joined a hip-hop collective in the mid-2000s called Ill Again – imagine the Beastie Boys with no success and a multiracial lineup. "It was superfun," he says. "But those days are over. I'm too old to rap now."

Trying to make it as an Asian-American actor sometimes proved frustrating. "If a casting breakdown said 'All-American Type' or 'Lead Role,' I knew they weren't thinking of me," he says. But after a slew of small TV roles (including a memorable cameo on *The Office*), Park finally got his big break last year, playing Kim Jong-un in *The Interview*.

Park played the North Korean leader as a Katy Perry-obsessed man-child struggling to assert his leadership amid fears of being seen as a pale imitation of his father. "I wanted to show that he is tough," Park says, "but there are also moments where you realize he's a complete psychopath." Park studied footage of Kim Jong-un hanging out with Dennis Rodman (noting that Kim was awestruck at the rare chance to meet a celebrity) but found the general lack of personal information about the dictator liberating: "It was freeing for me, because I got to really create this person." Park was dismayed that *The Interview* was pulled from theaters after North Korean threats – and equally dismayed by the savage reviews it got. "I think it was sharp satire," he says, "but it was lost in all the poop jokes with the critics."

Now, Park's career is humming: *Fresh Off the Boat* seems sure to get picked up for a second season, and Park will appear in the upcoming *Wet Hot American Summer* TV series. "I hope I get the chance to keep acting in great projects," he says. "And I hope that none of them cause another international incident."

ANDY GREENE



Kaukonen onstage last year

CHECKING IN

A '60S ROCK ORIGINAL KEEPS ON EXPLORING

Ex-Jefferson Airplane guitarist Jorma Kaukonen makes a sweet, folky new LP

Jorma Kaukonen is as amazed as anybody that he's still in business. "I never imagined I'd last this long," says the former Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna guitarist, who battled heroin addiction in the 1980s. "For a lot of our friends, that didn't happen." But at 74, Kaukonen is enjoying a rare second wind. His new album, *Ain't in No Hurry,* returns to the acoustic format of his 1974 solo set, *Quah.* One highlight is "Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me," with new music by Kaukonen and previously unpublished lyrics by Woody Guthrie. "Now I've co-written a song with Woody Guthrie!" he says. These days, Kaukonen spends much of his time on the Fur Peace Ranch, the guitar school and theater he runs in southeastern Ohio. Friends like Warren Haynes and Larry Campbell have visited as guest instructors. "It sounds sappy," Kaukonen says, "but it's a musical community of like-minded spirits." The ranch's museum, housed in a silo, includes psychedelic relics like Airplane bassist Jack Casady's sunglasses and Wavy Gravy's Woodstock sleeping bag. Kaukonen isn't sure what, if anything, he'll be doing to mark the Airplane's 50th anniversary this year, but he's game. "I could see us yakking on talk shows," he says. "Getting all the surviving members to agree on anything is like a rapprochement between the Palestinians and the Israelis. But anything's possible."

DAVID BROWNE

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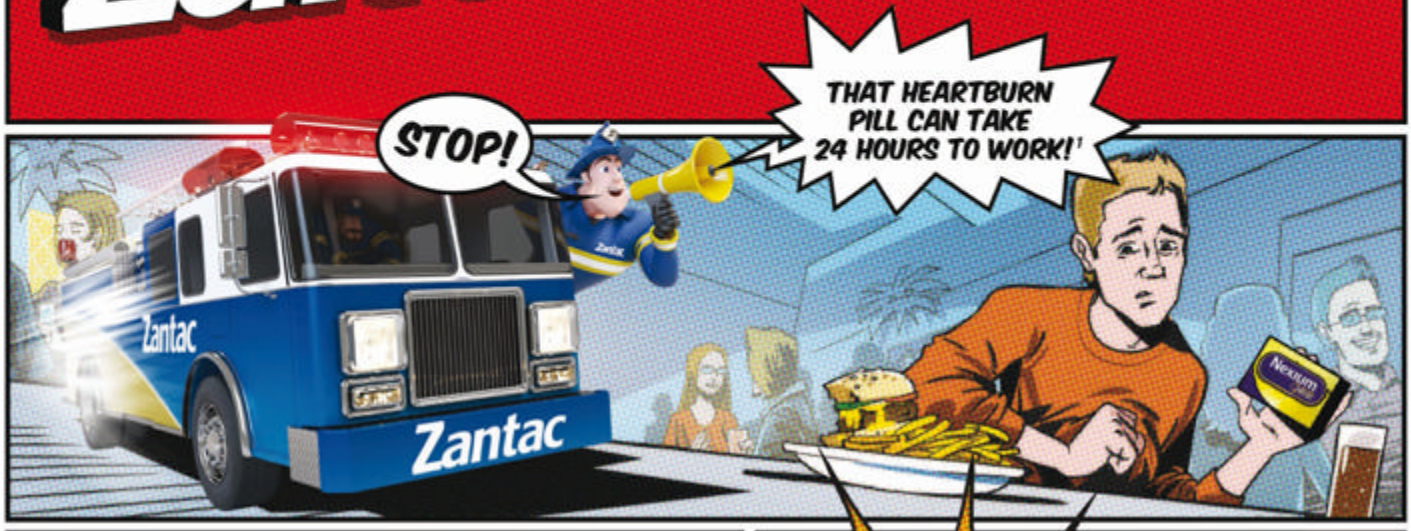

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TRIBUTES

Lesley Gore, 1946-2015

The 'It's My Party' singer brought teen angst to the charts and created a feminist anthem

Lesley Gore, whose brash, defiant teenage anthem "It's My Party" shot her to fame in the early Sixties, died from lung cancer at a New York hospital on February 16th. She was 68. "Her records may have been about teen angst," says her friend Paul Shaffer, "but nothing made you feel as good as listening to them."

Lesley Sue Goldstein was born in Brooklyn on May 2nd, 1946. With help from her vocal instructor, she recorded a series of demos at age 16 that grabbed the attention of Quincy Jones, who signed her to Mercury Records and produced her early singles, including "It's My Party." The song, about watching a boyfriend walk off with another girl, shot to Number One in 1963. Gore followed it up with the Number Five hit "Judy's Turn to Cry," a sequel in which Gore wins back her boyfriend.

YOU DON'T OWN HER Gore, in the Sixties.

Just months later, Gore completely left behind her bratty, boy-crazy image with "You Don't Own Me," a powerful, proto-feminist statement where she defiantly declared, "I'm not one of your many toys." It's been covered by everyone from Dusty Springfield to Joan Jett, and it became the highlight of Gore's live shows for decades to come. "As I got older, feminism became more a part of my life," she said in 2010. "I don't care what you are – whether you're 16 or 116 – there's nothing more wonderful than standing on the stage and shaking your finger and singing, 'Don't tell me what to do.'"

Gore delivered the definitive version of the song in the legendary *T.A.M.I. Show* concert movie, released in 1964. "She rocked the joint," says Shaffer, "and stood right up there with all the greats, including Chuck Berry, the Rolling Stones, James Brown and the Supremes."

At the height of her fame, Gore enrolled at Sarah Lawrence College, playing shows and shooting TV appearances on the weekends. By the time she graduated, the British Invasion had decimated the girl-group scene. Gore moved to California and began writing her own songs, eventually appearing in Broadway shows like *Smokey Joe's Cafe* and earning a living on the nostalgia circuit. Ten years ago, she came out publicly as a lesbian. "I didn't know until I was in my twenties," she said. "Times were different then, so I just tried to live as normally as humanly possible."

ANDY GREENE

The Soul Man's Soul Man

Remembering Don Covay, the R&B powerhouse behind 'Chain of Fools,' who died January 31st

BY PETER WOLF

I went to high school in Harlem, so I'd go to the Apollo once a week and see guys like Ben E. King, Solomon Burke, Joe Tex and Wilson Pickett. They all needed songs, and Don Covay had this incredible reputation among them as a writer. His songs were primal, street primal, and they had an honesty about them – "Mercy, Mercy," "Chain of Fools," "See Saw" and "Sookie Sookie."

Like all soul greats, Don grew up in the church – his father was a minister in South Carolina. In the late Fifties, Don got his start working with Little Richard, who nicknamed him "Pretty Boy." Don used Richard's band, the Upsetters, on his early Atlantic recordings, including an amazing guitar player called Jimmy James, a.k.a. Jimi Hendrix.

Covay

Don told me that Jimi is on "Mercy, Mercy." The Stones went on to record it; you could see where they were inspired by Don. I remember Keith Richards saying that if you put Don and Mick Jagger's voices on a graph, they would probably be identical sonically. When they were recording *Dirty Work*, I brought Don in to meet Mick. It was enough soul-man power in the room to last 13 days and 13 nights!

You needed a certain tongue-in-cheek charm to get songs like Don's over, and Don had that. Aretha Franklin and I did a tribute to Sam Cooke at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame recently, and I went backstage and paid my respects. When I mentioned Don's name, she just smiled and said, "Oh, that one! What a character."

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PROFILE

Kim Gordon's New Noise

An alt-rock icon on divorce, art, and life after Sonic Youth

By Jonah Weiner

In late 2011, Kim Gordon endured two life-upending events. First, she and her husband of many decades, Thurston Moore – who co-founded and co-fronted Sonic Youth with her and guitarist Lee Ranaldo – announced their divorce. A month later, Ranaldo heralded the dissolution of Sonic Youth itself. For the group's cult of admirers – a category that over the years has included Kurt Cobain, Michael Stipe, Kathleen Hanna and Carrie Brownstein – both pieces of news were fairly earthshaking. In 1989, MTV had declared Sonic Youth the "standard-bearers for alternative rock," and it was taken for granted that the band, and the romantic partnership at its core, must surely be immortal. Gordon, for her part, had established herself as an unlikely fashion icon, resilient tastemaker and all-around feminist badass. But the band had grown fatigued, and Moore had cheated.

Newly single and with her main creative outlet gone, Gordon says, "There was a kind of 'How did I get here?'" So last February she escaped Northampton, Massachusetts, where she and Moore had set up house, and she moved to her native L.A., renting a $159-a-night Echo Park bungalow on Airbnb. Gordon set to work on what would become *Girl in a Band*, her new memoir.

At first, she envisioned the duties of a memoirist prankishly. "I was like, 'I want to write a book like Bob Dylan's *Chronicles* and just make stuff up,'" says Gordon, 61. That didn't happen, but she retained a looseness as she went, obeying impulses and avoiding any topic she deemed boring. "I didn't wanna overthink what I was gonna do. I know someone will one day write a good Sonic Youth book, but at the outset I said, 'This is not that.'" She focused, instead, on distinct memories, like moving to New York City in 1980 as an aspiring conceptual artist and crashing briefly at Cindy Sherman's apartment, or playing Sonic Youth's final show, in Brazil, by which point she and Moore had ceased speaking to each other.

Though Gordon discusses the demise of her marriage in *Girl in a Band* – reserving especially harsh words for Moore's new partner – her ex appears as an oddly ghostlike figure. In part, she says, these omissions are a function of an impulse toward privacy, but they're also because, on a fundamental level, Moore had become unrecognizable. "He was a stranger, in a way," she says. "Obviously, there's a lot I didn't know about him." In the book, she wonders aloud, while recounting their early courtship, "whether you can truly love, or be loved back, by someone who hides who they are." (There are also swipes at Billy Corgan, Courtney Love and Lana Del Rey, whose fatalist aesthetic Gordon finds so distasteful that she writes, "Why doesn't she just off herself?" Gordon says she included these asides at her editor's insistence.)

KOOL THING Gordon in L.A. in February

Gordon says that, even if it weren't for her split from Moore, "the clock was ticking" for Sonic Youth: "You do something for 30 years…" she says, shrugging. Lately, she's busy with her new act, an improvisatory guitar duo called Body/Head. But Gordon says she long considered herself a visual artist who happened to be in a band and, in a sense, she's come full circle after a 30-year detour: She's single, in L.A., trying to mount shows of her conceptualist-influenced artwork. (Her daughter with Moore, Coco, is a painter, as it turns out, enrolled in art school in Chicago.)

Things on this front have been good: In 2014, her friend Larry Gagosian helped stage a show of hers. Meanwhile, she started to date again. In Sonic Youth, Gordon says, it felt like "my life's going by and I haven't done all these things I've put off doing." But *Girl in a Band* carries an overarching, albeit tentative, theme of renewal. "It seems," Gordon says, "like all these good things are happening."

Photograph by Frank W. Ockenfels 3

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TANGLED ROOTS Giddens onstage in 2014

BREAKING

Rhiannon Giddens' Old-Time Religion

Carolina Chocolate Drops singer gives roots music a shot in the arm on solo debut

On the last day of work for *Lost on the River*, the 2014 album based on newly unearthed Bob Dylan lyrics, Rhiannon Giddens sang her own ballad "Angel City" for the rest of the cast, including Elvis Costello and My Morning Jacket's Jim James. Giddens had written the tune as raw gratitude – the sessions were her first collaboration with that sort of rock-star company. "This was my gift," she says, telling them, "'You were all so good to me.'"

"Angel City" is the climax of *Tomorrow Is My Turn*, Giddens' solo debut after a decade in the string band the Carolina Chocolate Drops. The rest of the record, produced by T Bone Burnett, is a spiritual archaeology of American racial and economic struggle via sublime covers of songs identified with Nina Simone, Patsy Cline and Elizabeth Cotten, among others. "Angel City" is now a thanks to "these women who came before," Giddens says. "I'm standing on their shoulders."

Giddens, 37, first shot to wider fame in 2013 with her regal vocal electricity in *Another Day, Another Time*, a Burnett-curated revue at New York's Town Hall celebrating the Sixties folk revival. "Great actresses have a quality where they get into a room and they're just into it, doing the scene without *doing* the scene – she had that," Burnett says of Giddens, who studied opera at Oberlin Conservatory. He claims he first proposed doing a solo LP with her at rehearsals for that show.

> **T Bone Burnett, who produced Giddens' LP, compares her to a "great actress."**

Married and a mother of two, Giddens grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, born into the kind of stories she tells on *Tomorrow* and her four albums with the Drops. A great-grandfather was a rum runner. When her white father and black mother wed, "it was a huge deal, even for Greensboro," Giddens notes grimly. "They had to go to another town to get a license."

Founded in 2005, the Carolina Chocolate Drops were a dance band with a mission, excavating the personal histories and historical narratives, black and white, in folk music. Giddens, still a member of the group, recalls talking with choreographer Twyla Tharp about a dance Tharp based on the Drops' version of "Ruby, Are You Mad at Your Man?" by the old-timey singer Cousin Emmy: "She said, 'I want to know, who's Ruby?' I realized Ruby represents these women like Emmy who have done so much amazing music before me. So when T Bone asked me, 'What is the record of your dreams?' I said, 'Finding Ruby.' That's what I want to do."

DAVID FRICKE

BOOKS

ROBERT CHRISTGAU CAN'T STOP

One of America's greatest critics looks back on 50 years of taking pop seriously

There aren't many people who were writing brilliantly about the Beatles in 1967 and just as brilliantly about Taylor Swift in 2015. Actually, there's just one: Robert Christgau, a rock critic so esteemed John Lennon once called him up to hang out and talk pop. Now, at 72, Christgau is publishing an excellent memoir, *Going Into the City*. "I've spoken to people in their twenties who use this term: 'What are you doing tonight?' 'I'm going into the city,'" he says. "That started for me when I was in high school buying cheap records on 42nd Street."

Christgau, who grew up in Queens in a fundamentalist Presbyterian family, arrived on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the Sixties. "One thing that distinguished me from most of the early rock critics: I was really into pop art," he says. "They were folkies." In the Seventies, he found a longtime home as the music editor of *The Village Voice*, where he championed everything from the Ramones to hip-hop. *Going Into the City* is full of rock-critic lore, with vivid cameo appearances by titans like Greil Marcus, Lester Bangs and Ellen Willis, Christgau's partner in the Sixties.

Christgau at home

Christgau writes with contagious insight about the records, novels, movies and paintings that have shaped his thinking over the years. In the Sixties, he was one of the first people arguing pop culture could be taken seriously for its own sake. Today, every TV recapper and rock blogger owes him a candygram. "I was fucking right and everybody agrees," he says. "I won that one."

JON DOLAN

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Noel Gallagher

On his far-out new solo album, getting drunk with Bono, and hating modern pop music

By Simon Vozick-Levinson

"Not great, not bad, just a fucking 'nother day," Noel Gallagher says with a bored sigh. It's midday in London, and the famously sour-tongued songwriter is calling while on a break from tour rehearsals for *Chasing Yesterday*, the second album by Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, the solo project he began after Oasis' 2009 split. Gallagher produced the LP himself, calling in session players to create a lush psychedelic vibe unlike anything he's ever done. "I'm loving the solitary aspect of being in the studio on my own," he says. "I spent 20 years in a band making records by committee. I'm fucked if I'm going to do that now. I think Oasis was at its best when I was solely in charge, anyway."

How are rehearsals going? Are you excited to tour this album?

Of course. Who would want to be Brian Wilson, sitting in a studio eating a carrot with your little fat feet in a sandpit, not going on tour? Fuck that.

Your new song "Riverman" has a Pink Floyd-style saxophone solo, which is pretty unexpected. What would you have said back when Oasis were getting started if someone had suggested adding a sax part to, say, "Live Forever"?

[*Laughs*] Well, that conversation wouldn't have lasted very long, and it would've ended with somebody being shown the exit door. But that was 20 years ago. You can't stay playing a Les Paul through a Marshall stack forever.

What's your lifestyle like now compared to those days?

If I can give you an analogy – back in the early days of Oasis, my lifestyle was like a wild fire-breathing dragon. My lifestyle now is like a faithful sheepdog. When you're 24 in the biggest band in the world, I'm sure you can work out all the nonsense that entails. When you're a 47-year-old solo artist, you become a fucking pussy. But if you still behave at 47 the way you were behaving at 24, you'd be a bit of a dick, wouldn't you?

How do you feel about being a lead singer? Do you like how your voice sounds on this record?

I come from the Neil Young and Bob Dylan school of thought on this. I don't give a fuck what anybody says about me as a singer. Is Neil Young the greatest singer in the world? No, he's not, but he's Neil Young, ain't he? And I've heard a billion covers of "Like a Rolling Stone," and they're all shit. You want to know why? Because Bob Dylan ain't singing it.

What about Jimi Hendrix's cover of "All Along the Watchtower"? Even Dylan likes that one.

Nonsense. I mean, yeah, it's fucking great – but by its very essence, it's only a watered-down version of the original.

What do you do for fun when you're not working?

I've always got a guitar in my hands. If I'm sitting at home, fucking about, I'm known to go through the Beatles' repertoire. Currently, I'm in a period of David Bowie songs. "Ashes to Ashes" is great when you're watching TV with the sound down.

What are your favorite TV shows?

I still can't get enough of *Seinfeld*. It's still the best thing that's ever been filmed. It reminds me of the Nineties – good times. I was the only person in England who was watching it! I identify with Jerry.

Did you watch this year's Grammys?

No. I can't really stomach things like that. Everybody's too nice. And it's, like, four hours. There can't be that many fucking awards for music, can there?

What did you think of Kanye West's statement that Beck should "respect artistry" and give his Album of the Year award to Beyoncé?

He's a character, I'll give him that. And I love his track "Black Skinhead." But somebody needs to buy that dumbass a dictionary so he can look up the word "artistry." Beck can play the banjo, for fuck's sake. Nobody plays the banjo!

You're friends with Bono. What do you talk about when you hang out?

Of all the people I know, he's the most fun to hang out with, for sure. He's a funny fucker, and he can drink. And he's got big ideas – for his band and for my music as well, which is astonishing. He's always giving me titles for songs and albums. I call him Father Bono.

What did you think of U2's new album?

I like it. Some of the greatest moments of my musical life have involved U2. Anybody who doesn't like *The Joshua Tree* is a cocksucker, for a start. And anybody who went to see the Zoo TV tour and didn't think it was the greatest of all time at that time is also a fucking idiot.

You recently said that you didn't want to live in a world where Ed Sheeran was headlining Wembley Stadium. Unfortunately, he is. Should we be worried about your well-being?

Am I going to take my own life, is that what you mean? [*Cont. on 24*]

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GALLAGHER

[*Cont. from 22*] No. He's all right, Ed. He took it with good humor, which is how it was meant. I was bemoaning the fact that the biggest rock bands in England can't even sell out Wembley, and yet pop music can.

Do you listen to much pop?

No. It's fucking awful. Modern pop music is bland nonsense. There isn't even a word yet that's capable of describing it. If it was a color, it would be beige, like a milky brown. Not for me.

What about Taylor Swift? She's a pop star, but many people praise her talent as a songwriter.

[*Laughs*] Who says that? Her parents?

Lots of people.

Name these people. That's bullshit. You're fucking lying. She seems like a nice girl, but no one has ever said those words, and you know it.

What about One Direction, do you like them?

I know Harry Styles. We've hung out a couple of times. They're lovely lads. But I've got to say, I have difficulties with people who don't write their own songs, who've got a team of songwriters who work for your record label.

Well, One Direction co-write a lot of their songs, to be fair. And many of the great Motown artists had teams of songwriters behind them – is that how you feel about them, too?

If you're trying to insinuate that what's going on now is akin to what was going on at Motown – what, were you out late eating magic mushrooms? Not equivalent. Not in the slightest.

Is songwriting still as fun for you as when you started out?

Oh, yeah. I still think tomorrow might be the day that I write the greatest song of all time. It's like going fishing. The guitar is your fishing rod, and if I'm not fishing for that song, fucking Bono will get it, and if he's not, Chris Martin will. And fuck those two guys, because they've got enough. We're all fishing in the same river, and it's cutthroat, baby.

NEW SCHOOL
Hunt onstage last year

COUNTRY

Sam Hunt's Quiet Storm

Meet the R&B-loving former college football star helping to give Nashville radio a makeover

When Sam Hunt was the starting quarterback for the University of Alabama at Birmingham a decade ago, he liked to unwind with a new hobby: learning acoustic guitar. "I didn't know anybody else I played ball with who also played music," recalls Hunt, now 30. "No matter how tired I was from practice, I'd sit up and learn."

Hunt was a good enough quarterback to get invited to training camp with the Kansas City Chiefs, though he soon got cut. Football's loss was music's gain: Hunt moved to Nashville in 2008 and eventually became a very 21st-century kind of country star. His chart-topping debut, *Montevallo,* owes as much to Drake and Adam Levine as to Willie and Waylon, combining earnest storytelling with drum-machine-driven pop production and smooth-crooning R&B-influenced vocals. Hunt's touring band looks like it's playing the Warped Tour, and his shows include snippets of hits by R. Kelly and Kanye West. "Country has always evolved," says Hunt, who grew up a fan of Destiny's Child and Nineties R&B stars like Ginuwine. "I've just stepped into that evolution – the 2015 version."

Hunt signed a publishing deal after moving to Nashville, but he became frustrated by the snail's pace with which the industry broke new acts. His solution? Release a free mixtape, Frank Ocean-style. When one of the mixtape's tracks, "We Are Tonight," became a smash hit for Billy Currington, labels started paying more attention, paving the way for *Montevallo.* "I always try to zig when they zag," he says. "It's a football term, but it applies to a lot of different areas of life."

NICK MURRAY

THE CLIMATE-CHANGE LIE FACTORY

Both the pope and the Pentagon agree that climate change is a threat to humanity, but thanks to the folks featured in Robert Kenner's scathing documentary, millions of Americans don't. *Merchants of Doubt* shows how conservative think tanks (funded by Exxon Mobil and the Koch brothers) borrowed the Big Tobacco playbook and marketed a small army of flacks as science experts to networks like Fox News and CNN. *Merchants* – inspired by the 2010 book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway – plays like a sequel to *Food, Inc.,* Kenner's 2008 film about the perils of industrial farming. "*Food, Inc.* isn't just about food – it's about transparency," he says. "*Merchants* isn't a film about climate change – it's a film about deceit."

Kenner

COCO MCPHERSON

FROM TOP: © CHRIS SCHWEGLER/RETNA LTD./CORBIS; CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES

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BLACK DYNASTY Bryshere Gray, Jussie Smollett, Henson, Howard (from left)

Unstoppable 'Empire'

The first great hip-hop soap opera is the blockbuster of 2015 – and if it doesn't make any sense, that's just part of the fun

By Rob Sheffield

Empire
Wednesdays, 9 p.m., Fox

If there's one moment that sums up why *Empire* is the TV blockbuster of 2015, here it is: Aspiring rapper Hakeem is making his new video, rolling on the bed with models and champagne. But he's having a little trouble on the set. His R&B-star girlfriend Tiana just busted him in the bubble bath with Naomi Campbell (these things happen). Now he's crushed to find out Tiana has her own side piece: a blond lesbian supermodel named India. His label boss, Lucious Lyon, who's also his dad, offers some fatherly consolation. "Let's look at it from a mathematical perspective," Lucious says. "Your girlfriend has a girlfriend. Add that up: two girlfriends. It's a mathematician's dream! It's trigonometry!"

No, dude, this is not trigonometry, or even real math – but it adds up to the perfect equation for a hip-hop soap smash. Fox's *Empire* is the year's ratings juggernaut, debuting big but then just getting bigger every week, which isn't supposed to happen anymore. It's easy to see why *Empire* is so huge: It's a gloriously preposterous full-court cheese blast, combining a hip-hop sensibility á la *Hustle & Flow* with an old-school sense of prime-time soap corn. This family-and-money saga goes for maximum flash, without slowing down to make a damn bit of sense. Subtlety? This is the kind of story where you can tell the artist is working in a ghetto-ass studio because it's named Ghetto-Ass Studio.

Terrence Howard is Lyon, the patriarch of Empire Entertainment, whose health troubles force him to think about his dynasty's future. So he sets up a Shakespearean battle among his three sons, none of whom have a hint of his street smarts. But his real nemesis is his ghetto-fabulous ex-wife, Cookie, who just got out of jail after serving 17 years for the drug-dealing that funded Lucious' label. As Cookie, Taraji P. Henson is Joan Collins times Foxy Brown, wearing leopard-print ensembles to board meetings. Cookie is the true star of the show; she makes *Scandal*'s Olivia Pope look like a mousy little paralegal. She can be trusted never to stomp out of a room without an exit line like, "The name's Cookie. Ask about me."

The setup may come from Shakespeare, but the sensibility is Eighties hits like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* – particularly the *Dallas* season where Jock's will divided Ewing Oil between Bobby and J.R. (Even old Miss Ellie knew that was bullshit, whispering, "Oh, Jock – no," at the will reading.) Cookie's favorite son is gay R&B singer Jamal; Lucious favors Hakeem, the rapper, even though he's so dumb his dad has to tell him what a threesome is.

Courtney Love has a role as the well-named R&B singer Elle Dallas, whose version of Al Green's "Take Me to the River" is enough to make you ache like she aches. There's also Judd Nelson as a rival rap mogul – yes, Judd Nelson from *The Breakfast Club*, who threatens to purchase Lucious' favorite strip club and rename it Cookie's. This means war!

Timbaland takes care of the music, which is more than sharp enough for network TV, though unlikely to make waves beyond that – Jamal's supposed R&B hit sounds like Eurythmics covering the *Good Times* theme. But like everything else on *Empire*, the music works because it goes for immediate impact without sweating the big picture. *Empire* is a smash because it knows exactly what it wants to be and doesn't pretend to be anything else. There's a good-natured sense of showbiz hustle to the production. All the actors can smell that they're in on something big, and they're as thirsty as the aspiring stars in the story. Get well, Lucious – *Empire* could stretch on for years to come.

SHORT TAKE

Spacey's Bad President

House of Cards
Netflix

Spacey as Underwood

If you thought Kevin Spacey was over-the-top as Sen. Frank Underwood, check him out now as the president! At first, *House of Cards* seemed to be gunning to become a prestige drama in the mode of *Mad Men* or *Breaking Bad*; during the second season, it took itself a lot less seriously, as Spacey cranked up the cartoon-villain factor. This season begins with him taking a whiz on his daddy's grave while explaining to the camera, in his South Carolina purr, that he visits cemeteries only to seem more human. Spacey throws his weight around the Oval Office with an element of ham that turns out to be right for the room – at this point, *House of Cards* doesn't go for political nuance, just "who will he crush next?" pulp. But that seems like an even trade. **R.S.**

FROM TOP: CHUCK HODES/FOX; DAVID GIESBRECHT/NETFLIX

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"I wanted to play my ass off and not be distracted by some dickhead with a camera." —Neil Young, on Woodstock

Random Notes

Prince played "Let's Go Crazy" as Jay Z and Rihanna went wild.

Taylor Swift Meets a Beatle!

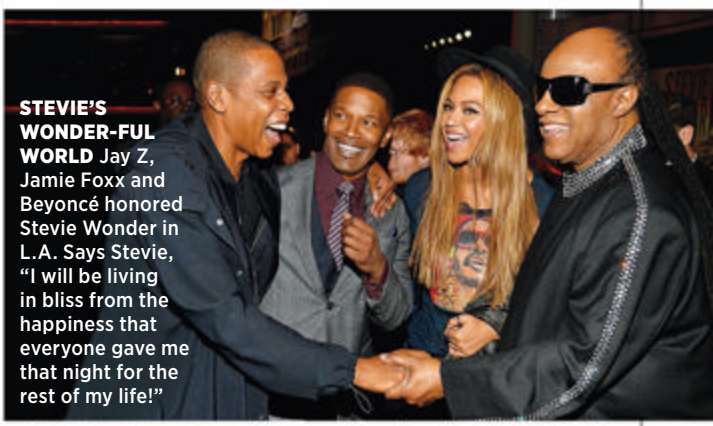
Hot new-duo alert! Long after the cameras stopped rolling at *SNL*'s 40th-anniversary celebration, the all-star afterparty at New York's Plaza Hotel was still going. Paul McCartney and Taylor Swift teamed up to jam on "I Saw Her Standing There" and "Shake It Off." "This is the reason for all the guitar lessons," said Swift, who called it "the coolest moment of my life." The night went on to include impromptu performances by everyone from Ariana Grande to Elvis Costello before wrapping up at 4 a.m.

Keith Richards with wife Patti Hansen. The Stones are rumored to be coming back to the U.S. this summer.

Dylan on Dylan

Bob Dylan gave a remarkable 40-minute speech at an event honoring him in L.A., tracing his roots and taking aim at his critics. "These songs of mine, I think of as mystery plays, the kind that Shakespeare saw when he was growing up," said the bard of Hibbing, Minnesota.

Backstage, Tom Jones met Bruce Springsteen. "[Dylan] had the balls to say what he wanted," says Jones.

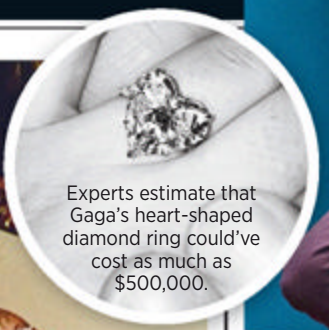


STEVIE'S WONDER-FUL WORLD Jay Z, Jamie Foxx and Beyoncé honored Stevie Wonder in L.A. Says Stevie, "I will be living in bliss from the happiness that everyone gave me that night for the rest of my life!"

THE WEIRD STRIPES "Weird Al" Yankovic and a Pee-Wee Hermanish Jack White hung out in Nashville. "When I have coffee with Weird Al, I'll know I've made it," White has said.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: DAVID ALLEN/TODAYSNEW.COM; NO CREDIT; MCMULLAN/SIPA USA; LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE; THIRD MAN RECORDS/INSTAGRAM; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE, 2

GOOD ROMANCE Lady Gaga got engaged to boyfriend Taylor Kinney on Valentine's Day. "She said yes!" said Kinney.



Experts estimate that Gaga's heart-shaped diamond ring could've cost as much as $500,000.

BACK IN ACTION Carrie Brownstein warmed up on her Gibson SG in Spokane, Washington, before Sleater-Kinney's first show in nine years. "I feel like my best guitar playing is in this band," she says.

Ed's School of Rock

Eddie Van Halen gave a master class at the Smithsonian for its "What It Means to Be American" program, reflecting on his band days and fatherhood – and, at one point, even strapping on a guitar to show off his technique. "I'm a 60-year-old punk kid who plays guitar in a rock & roll band – and I'm so blessed!" he said. Offstage, he told RS that he'd like to make a new album with Van Halen – if he can find his singer: "I don't know what Dave [Lee Roth] is up to. I don't know if he's living in New York or Japan or wherever he is."

SONG BIRD Katy Perry greeted photographers as she hosted a party at her L.A. home, with John Mayer in attendance.

POP PUNK Miley Cyrus recruited Laura Jane Grace for a backyard charity gig. "We hung in the L.A. sunshine and played some music," says Grace.

APOLLO MISSION D'Angelo – who won the Apollo's amateur-night contest in 1991 – made a triumphant return to the Harlem venue.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TAYLOR KINNEY/INSTAGRAM; LADY GAGA/INSTAGRAM; CHONA KASINGER; MILEY CYRUS/INSTAGRAM; JESSICA LEHRMAN; OWEN SWEENEY/INVISION/AP IMAGES; COUSART/JFXIMAGES/WENN.COM

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CANADA'S CRUDE AWAKENING

Though oil prices are crashing and the Keystone XL pipeline is in doubt, Canada is doubling down on becoming a dirty-energy superpower

★ By Tim Dickinson ★

A death knell may be ringing for the Keystone XL pipeline. In February, the Republican Congress teed up a presidential veto of the export pipeline for filthy Canadian tar-sands crude. The same month, the Environmental Protection Agency revealed Keystone could spur 1.37 billion tons of excess carbon emissions, providing the State Department with all the scientific evidence required to spike the project, permanently. If the news cheered climate activists across the globe, it also underscored the folly of Canada's catastrophic quest, in recent years, to transform itself into a dirty-energy "superpower."

In the minds of many American right-wingers, Canada may be a socialist hellscape of universal health care and quasi-European welfare policies. But it is also home to 168 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, the third-largest in the world. Since ultraconservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper – famously described by one Canadian columnist as "our version of George W. Bush, minus the warmth and intellect" – took power in 2006, he's quietly set his country on a course that seems to be straight from the Koch brothers' road map. Harper, 55, has gutted environmental regulation and fast-tracked colossal projects to bring new oil to market. Under his leadership, Canada has also slashed corporate taxes in half and is eliminating 30,000 public-sector jobs.

Riding record-high oil prices – $107 a barrel as recently as last June – Harper's big bet on Canadian crude appeared savvy. The oil boom had driven a seven percent surge in national income, helping Canada ride out the Great Recession with less anguish than most developed nations. And with fossil fuels swelling to nearly 40 percent of net exports, Harper's Conservative government was on track to deliver a Tea Party twofer in advance of federal elections this fall: a budget surplus and a deep tax cut for the country's richest earners.

But today, with the price of oil cut in half, the Canadian economy is staggering. Tar-sands producers have clawed back billions in planned investments and begun axing jobs by the thousands. The Canadian dollar, recently at parity with the U.S. dollar, has dipped to about 80 cents. Instead of a federal budget surplus, economists are now projecting a C$2.3 billion deficit. "The drop in oil prices," said Stephen Poloz, the nation's central banker, in January, "is unambiguously negative for the Canadian economy."

If low oil prices hold, the pain will get worse. Most of Canada's reserves are locked up in tar sands. The industrial operations required to get the oil from the ground to your gas tank are not only filthy and energy-intensive – generating up to double the greenhouse emissions of conventional oil – they also take years of construction to bring online. Because of investment decisions made during the boom years, tar-sands production is projected to expand by seven percent this year, exacerbating the glut. The collapse of crude is threatening to take Harper's nearly decade-long rule down with it. Canada's Liberal party, headed by 43-year-old Justin Trudeau (son of legendary Canadian PM Pierre), is running neck and neck in the polls, and bashing Harper where he used to be strongest – his management of the economy. "It's not fiscally responsible," said Trudeau in January, "to pin all your hopes on oil prices remaining high, and when they fall, being forced to make it up as they go along."

As we, in the United States, consider the fate of our own massive oil reserves and confront the specter of yet another Bush presidency, Stephen Harper's Canada offers a cautionary tale – about the economic and political havoc that can be unleashed when a first-world nation yokes itself to Tea Party economics and to the boom and bust of Big Oil.

Stephen Harper came of age in Alberta, a land of cowboys and oil rigs sometimes referred to as "Texas of the North." He began his career in the mailroom of Imperial Oil (today an offshoot of Exxon). He rose through Parliament promising a revolution in federal affairs under the battle cry "The West wants in!" Following his election to prime minister in 2006, he wasted little time unveiling his plan to open up his nation's vast oil reserves. Before an audience of British businessmen in 2006, he spoke of "the emerging energy superpower our government intends to build," and rhapsodized about the "ocean of oil-soaked sand [that] lies under the muskeg of northern Alberta." He framed the challenge of bringing that crude to market as though it were a Wonder of the World. "It requires vast amounts of capital…and an army of skilled workers," he said. "It is an enterprise of epic proportions, akin to the building of the pyramids or China's Great Wall. Only bigger."

Championing dirty oil meant that Harper had to undermine traditional Canadian values – including environmental stewardship and international collaboration. In 2011, Canada unceremoniously abandoned its climate obligations under

Illustration by Victor Juhasz

the Kyoto Accord, which Harper had once blasted as "a socialist scheme to suck money out of wealth-producing nations."

Under Harper, investment in the tar sands has surged more than 140 percent to C$59 billion. And the value of Canadian crude exports has more than doubled, to C$82 billion. In the process, northern Alberta has become an environmental sacrifice zone: Tar-sands strip mining has created an apocalyptic landscape of oil-scarred tundra and toxic wastewater ponds.

Today, the tar sands produce nearly 2 million barrels a day. And the United States consumes virtually every drop: Canadian crude makes up 42 percent of American net oil imports. Until the current crash, it looked like the party was just getting started. In June, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers projected tar-sands output would double by 2025.

Canada has benefited from Harper's oil boom – though less than you might imagine. In a quirk of Canadian law, the federal government collects no oil royalties. Its fortunes rise, indirectly, from oil, benefiting only from GDP growth and the surge in corporate and payroll taxes. The province of Alberta does collect oil royalties: C$5.2 billion last year alone. But far from socking that money away in a sovereign wealth fund – as Norway has done, amassing a portfolio worth more than $800 billion – the province has pissed it away on tax cuts. In 2001, Alberta instituted a flat tax of just 10 percent. To keep the working class on board, Alberta's government eliminated health care premiums for the province's version of Canada's national health care. Ever since – notwithstanding years of inflated oil prices – the province has bled red ink and has no financial reserves to cushion the crash.

Alberta created nearly 50 percent of Canadian jobs in the past decade, but the province's good fortune actually hurt the rest of the country. Canada now effectively has two economies, and they work at cross purposes. When oil is booming, the Canadian dollar is strong. That undermines the traditional manufacturing economy by inflating the cost of export goods like Canadian car parts. "As the dollar was rising because of higher oil prices," Poloz said, it drove "destruction of the capacity to export."

Until now, the Harper government has been happy to sacrifice industry for oil. Speaking last June, near the peak in crude prices, Harper's dour finance minister, Joe Oliver, underscored the government's conviction that Canada's economic future hinges on massive oil reserves, not its Rust Belt manufacturing base. "The choice is stark," Oliver told a summit of the International Economic Forum of the Americas in Montreal. "Head down the path of economic decline, higher unemployment…and growing debt, or achieve prosperity and security now and for future generations through the responsible development of our resources."

If you think Keystone XL plays an outsize role in our national political debate, you haven't visited Canada lately. For years, the Harper government had pinned its hopes on this export pipeline to ensure the continued, explosive growth in tar-sands production.

Even under the best of circumstances, the economics of Canadian crude extraction are tough. It requires huge upfront capital expenditures in heavy machinery to strip-mine raw tar sands, separate the tarry bitumen with heat and steam, and then upgrade the sludge into a synthetic crude, liquid enough to transport. If capital requirements are higher, revenues from tar-sands crude sales are historically lower than for conventional oil. Alberta is remote and landlocked, and the primary refining capacity for the crude sits in the U.S. Midwest. This gives the refin-

ers the upper hand. Even when oil prices were peaking last summer, Canadian oil traded at roughly $20 a barrel less than the benchmark price for West Texas Intermediate – costing the country billions.

Desperate to reduce, if not eliminate, that disparity, the Harper government has sought access to the global export market – where oil prices are set by supply and demand, not quirks of geography. Shipping oil at that scale requires pipelines. Thus, one of Harper's earliest priorities was clearing the way for infrastructure giant TransCanada to build an 830,000-barrel-a-day pipeline connecting Alberta's oil patch to American Gulf Coast refineries.

When plans for Keystone XL were announced, in 2008, it seemed like a slam-dunk. On his first international trip, in 2009, President Obama traveled to Ottawa, where he and Harper began negotiations over tar-sands crude. In 2011, Hillary Clinton's State Department released a report finding the pipeline would create "limited adverse environmental impacts."

Then, almost overnight, under the leadership of climate activists like Bill McKibben and 350.org, Keystone XL became an emblem of the fight against climate change. Harper was shocked when Obama called in November 2011 to tell him the project – a "no-brainer" in Harper's mind – was now on hold.

Attempting to break the logjam, Harper began pitching tar-sands oil abroad. In February 2012, he took his pitch to America's chief economic rival, China. "Ninety-nine percent of Canada's energy exports go to one country – the United States," he told a crowd of executives in Guangzhou. "It is increasingly clear that Canada's commercial interests are best served through diversification of our energy markets."

No longer able to bank on Keystone, the Harper government embarked on a mad rush to approve pipelines to ports on both of Canada's coasts – only to discover that anti-pipeline fervor had migrated north. In 2012, Joe Oliver, then the natural-resources minister, lashed out at "radical" environmental groups for attempting to "hijack" Canada's economy. Their crime? Seeking mandated reviews of pipeline projects, spills from which would endanger fisheries, drinking water and fragile ecosystems.

To avoid a crimp in production, the tar-sands producers said they needed at least one export pipeline to come online by 2018. So the Harper regime proceeded to rewrite bedrock environmental law, jamming through 150 pages of deregulation on the back of the federal budget in 2012. Heavily influenced by the oil industry, according to documents leaked to environmental groups, the legislation slashed protections for waterways and replaced mandatory environmental impact reviews with assessments performed only at the discretion of political appointees. Ecologists decried the budget as the worst setback in environmental law in more than five decades. Worse: Harper's government now insists it has no authority to weigh climate impacts when permitting pipeline projects.

But far from speeding pipeline construction, the Harper government's overreach has led provincial and First Nations stakeholders to fight back – stalling two pipeline projects that would carry Alberta crude across the Canadian Rockies to the Pacific Coast. Last May, the Harper government gave its approval to Northern Gateway, a 525,000-barrel-a-day pipeline terminating in a small port town near the Alaska border. But the project has bogged down, facing hundreds of provincial regulatory hurdles and now nearly a dozen lawsuits from First Nations that would bear the environmental impacts of construction and supertanker traffic. Similar opposition has stymied a proposal to triple the capacity of the existing 300,000-barrel-a-day Trans Mountain pipeline – which stretches from the oil patch to climate-conscious Vancouver.

Blocked to the south and the west, the Harper regime has thrown its weight behind the $10 billion Energy East project – TransCanada's "plan B" to Keystone XL. The pipeline would carry a third more oil, 1.1 million barrels a day, and stretch across four time zones to the Atlantic Ocean deepwater port of St. John – before being loaded onto tankers and shipped to refineries as far away as India.

CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER STEPHEN HARPER WAS SHOCKED WHEN PRESIDENT OBAMA CALLED TO TELL HIM KEYSTONE XL – A "NO-BRAINER" IN HARPER'S MIND – WAS ON HOLD.

As elections approach this fall, Harper is vulnerable on all fronts. The collapse in crude has thrown his economic agenda into disarray. The Conservative government won't even reveal its budget – originally expected in February – praying that a quick rebound in crude prices might fix the hole in federal finances.

In December, Harper angered climate-conscious voters by abandoning a pledge

FROM LEFT: BRYNN ANDERSON/AP IMAGES; DON RYAN/AP IMAGES; ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES; MAD MAGAZINE; ESA HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE/NASA; BRIAN ACH/GETTY IMAGES; DORLING KINDERSLEY/GETTY IMAGES; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"

THREAT ASSESSMENT THE GOOD, THE [illegible]ND THE SCARY

WITH US

Gay marriage comes to Alabama.

First bi governor takes over in Oregon.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg confesses she was blotto when she nodded off at SOTU.

Weird Al becomes *MAD* magazine's first guest editor.

Hubble finds **cosmic emoticon**.

Model with Down syndrome struts catwalk in NYC Fashion Week.

Scientists: **Dinosaurs used to get high** on psychedelic fungus.

MESSY SITUATION Protesters take to the streets in Vancouver to march against oil-friendly Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his administration's proposed pipeline projects.

TOP: JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP IMAGES; BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: EVERETT COLLECTION; DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; MARCUS CONSTANTINO/REUTERS/LANDOV; HEINZ; CLAIRE FACKLER/NOAA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES; NO CREDIT; SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY/GETTY IMAGES; JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES; VICTORIA WILL/INVISION/AP IMAGES

to put a price on carbon. "Under the current circumstances," he said, "it would be crazy. . . . We're not going to kill jobs, and we're not going to impose the carbon tax."

And Harper's failure to broker a deal with Obama on Keystone XL has stirred resentment with voters in the western provinces. When Trudeau spoke before the Calgary Petroleum Club in February, the crowd broke into spontaneous applause after he slammed Harper over the "broken" relationship with the United States: "[The] prime minister has demonstrated . . . that he just doesn't play well with others."

Far from speaking truth to power to Calgary's oilmen, Trudeau is pitching himself as a liberal who can at once rebuild international trust in Canada's environmental ethics and bring the tar sands to market. He says it's unfair that Canada's oil sands have been made the poster child for climate change. And he dismissed environmentalists and the belief that "if you block the pipelines, you can shut down the oil sands and save the planet." That thinking, he added, is as "simplistic as it is wrong."

Unfortunately, the science tells us that this "simplistic" thinking is entirely accurate. A January paper in the journal *Nature*, modeling the unburnable fossil-fuel reserves across the globe, concludes that 99 percent of Canada's tar sands must stay in the ground to keep global temperature rise under catastrophic levels. As a policy matter, that means winding down production in the next five years – with mining of Canadian bitumen dropping to "negligible levels after 2020."

None of Canada's major political parties are providing the leadership to put the country on that path. But the free market and depressed oil prices could force such changes all the same. A study of the national oil and gas industries published in January by investment research firm CanOils warned that fewer than 20 percent of Canada's oil firms "will be able to sustain their business long-term."

Existing tar-sands operations will yet be able to cover their cash costs at $50 a barrel, CanOils writes. But because of the massive startup costs required, most new investments in oil-sands production simply won't pencil out. If the markets become convinced that cheap oil is here to stay, producers won't be able to borrow against future reserves and financing will dry up. "Canadian oil production, on the whole, appears unsustainable in the long run at $50," the report concludes. Adding to the grim forecast, Goldman Sachs analysts said in January that they think the oil slide won't stabilize until prices hit $30 a barrel. Citibank was even more bearish, forecasting the price of a barrel falling to $20.

Canada, indeed, stands at a crossroads. It can continue down Harper's chosen path, unearthing billions of barrels of filthy fossil fuels and shackling its economy to the volatile trade in a single commodity – becoming rich or going broke at the whim of the oil markets.

Or it can take advantage of the collapse of crude prices to return to a more sustainable economy – as a currency-advantaged exporter of goods and services to its southern neighbor, the most voracious consumer economy on Earth. But even if Canadians oust Harper in October, a transformational change away from the nation's new petro-economy appears remote. "'The West got in,'" Trudeau conceded to the audience at the Calgary Petroleum Club. "And it will remain in."

AGAINST US

Brian Williams

Oil train derails, explodes in West Virginia.

Sriracha ketchup

Humans now **dumping 8.8 million tons of plastic** a year into oceans.

Three Muslim students gunned down near UNC.

Stowaway scorpion stings airplane passenger.

Study: Global-warming-driven **"mega-droughts"** to plague Southwest after 2050.

Jon Stewart retires.

Live To Tell

AFTER 30 YEARS OF PROVOCATION, A FIERY MADONNA EXPLAINS WHY SHE ISN'T NEARLY DONE PUSHING LIMITS

By Brian Hiatt

"She's coming out," a choreographer says over a P.A. system, sounding tense. "Everyone get your horns and masks on." A couple of nights before the Grammys, 22 shirtless, flawlessly fit male dancers, each equipped with a bejeweled face mask and hazardous-looking black bull's horns, line up on a rehearsal-studio stage within Sony Pictures' Culver City lot, awaiting inspection. Madonna struts out of a dressing room far across the studio, dressed in a matador outfit, sans pants. Trailed by a hairstylist and a makeup artist, she spends at least 30 seconds eyeing each dancer, probing for tiny imperfections in the fit of their leather costumes and

Photograph by Mert Alas & Marcus Piggot

masks. "I don't want oil on their bodies," she notes. "I had the same problem on the video. You can use body moisturizer."

Twenty-eight choral singers, most of them less finely sculpted specimens, assemble by the nearby bleachers. Madonna gives them even more individual attention. On their red robes is a logo from her new album, *Rebel Heart* – a detail even HD cameras will never pick up. She asks the ones who wear glasses if they can take them off; suggests hairstyles and, occasionally, cuts ("The nice thing about hair is that it grows back"); critiques beards and sideburns; and in one woman's case, reaches out and begins braiding curls herself.

All of this work is for five minutes' worth of TV time, the debut performance of her new single, the deep-house-inflected "Living for Love." In keeping with the lyric "Love's gonna lift me up," it ends with a prone Madonna soaring 15 feet into the air via a harness. It's a lovely image, though as she hovers tonight she breaks the spell by asking, "Are my boobs coming out of my costume?"

In between takes, two small children come up to the stage. They're both nine years old – the boy, David, is in crisp white linen; the girl, Mercy, is wearing a blue sweater and skirt, a sparkly bow in her hair. "Hi, Mom," they say, in unison, and Madonna smiles, offering a hand for her youngest kids to kiss.

As the downtime stretches on for a few more seconds, she begins to lose patience. "Are we having a break right now?" Madonna asks into her microphone. "Or can we go? I have things I need to do."

Four days later, Madonna is back in her home on Manhattan's Upper East Side. There's a lot of impressive art just in the second-floor sitting room, including a Léger above the fireplace and Frida Kahlo's "Mi Nacimiento" resting casually on a stack of books. Family pictures going back to Madonna's childhood are on a glass end table, and sheet music from Mercy's lessons sits on the piano in the corner. There's a highly eclectic collection of books on the shelves, from art tomes to Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* to a biography of the late John F. Kennedy Jr., a rumored paramour.

More books are neatly stacked on the cream-colored coffee table, which precisely matches the couch – *Gay New York,* Luc Sante's *Low Life,* Curtis Sittenfeld's novel *Sisterland.* Alongside them is a set of black binders filled with photographs – references for a movie she plans to direct, based on the 2013 novel *The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells.*

Also on the coffee table are my twin digital recorders. Madonna reaches down and lines them up more evenly. "I have OCD," she says, brightly. She asks for my zodiac sign. The answer – Taurus – seems acceptable. "Strong-willed people," she says. "They don't like to change. But very loyal."

I laugh a little, then find myself assuring Madonna that I'm not sneering at astrology. "Oh, OK, good," she says. "You can't be a human being and laugh at it. Because it's a science, it really is. I mean, obviously there's a lot of charlatans. In general, and in specific."

Thanks to an overnight flight, not to mention decades of insomnia, Madonna is exhausted. "I was doing yoga earlier," she says, settling onto her couch. She's wearing a black, high-necked Dolce & Gabbana blouse and matching skirt, with Prada boots. There's a small cross around her neck, a gold grille on her teeth and a Jacob the Jeweler watch on her wrist. "And I literally fell asleep in corpse pose. But you know, yoga is a preparation for death. Yogis get to a point where they can literally slow their heartbeats down. And then as they get older, they go into the woods, and they sit in their loincloth or whatever it is, and they choose to stop their heart. Anyway, that's what yoga's all about. It's not about twisting yourself into a pretzel. It's about preparing for death. Detachment from desire. What a great way to start an interview!"

"Women my age have accepted they're not allowed to behave a certain way. I never followed rules. I'm not going to start now."

I was struck by your extraordinary attention to detail – going over each singer, each dancer. What is that all about for you?

I've always been that way, and then it's just developed over the years, as I've done more things – especially film directing. I really want to see everything. If it's around me and it's part of my show, I need to be a part of all of it. From the creation of the music, to the surface of the floor, to everyone's hairstyle, to the details with the buttons and the bows and the snaps and the zippers. All of those things! I don't know where it started, but I think it's just gotten worse [*laughs*].

Or better.

Or better, yeah. Because I do think that those details matter.

When you're making a new album, how do you deal with the pressure of living up to your past work?

I don't think about my old stuff. I just move forward. I mean, it's funny, because when I work with people, they're referencing other things. Diplo kept wanting to play, like, the bass line for "Vogue" or something from "La Isla Bonita" over and over again. I'm like, "OK, let's move on." I forget about stuff. I don't feel like I have to live up to anything. I'm just thinking about what I want to write about.

At the same time, the new song "Veni Vidi Vici" is very self-referential, even dropping old song titles.

Yeah, because every once in a while, it is good to look back and tell a story about how a girl from Detroit came to New York.

I mean, it is an amazing story. Are you able to recognize it now?

[*Softly*] It's crazy, what's happened in my life and what I've been through. If I really think about it, I've had an amazing life. And I've met so many amazing people. I saw [*Like a Prayer* producer] Nile Rodgers at the Grammys, and I just gave him the longest, biggest hug. I feel like I've survived so much, and been through so much. And sometimes I miss the innocence of those times. Life was different. New York

Senior writer Brian Hiatt *wrote January's Stevie Nicks cover story.*

GET ON YOUR BOOTS Backstage (below) and performing at this year's Grammys. "I want to see everything, from the hairstyles to the buttons."

was different. The music business was different. I miss the simplicity of it, the naiveté of everyone around me.

Some people are very invested in the idea of "Who's the Queen of Pop?" Is that a crown you're interested in?

Well, I do think of myself as a queen, but I don't think I'm the only queen. There's room for other queens. We reign over different kingdoms.

Lady Gaga told Howard Stern that there's a perception out there that she was going for your crown. "I don't want her fucking throne," she said.

I don't think she wants my crown, either. We live in a world where people like to pit women against each other. And this is why I love the idea of embracing other females who are doing what I'm doing. It's important for us to support each other. The only time I ever criticized Lady Gaga was when I felt like she blatantly ripped off one of my songs. It's got nothing to do with "she's taking my crown" or "she's in some space of mine." She has her thing. I do think she's a very talented singer and songwriter. It was just that one issue. And everybody's obviously run with it and turned it into a huge feud, which I think is really boring, quite frankly. And you know what? I don't care anymore. Here's the thing: One day, everyone's going to just shut up about it. You'll see! I have a plan.

Do you keep journals? Do you write poetry that no one reads?

Yeah, both. Actually, one of my assistants just found one of my journals from 1991. I'm complaining the same way about not being able to sleep in 1991 as I am right now. Like, some things never change. So that was, in a way, reassuring.

You were saying the same thing in the Eighties. When did the insomnia start?

Unconsciously, probably when my mother died. And sleep's never been an easy thing for me.

So do you live on three hours of sleep a night?

If I can get six hours, I can get through the day. But because I want to have a career and also be an attentive mother, I tend to take a lot of breaks and deal with my kids, and then go back to work. In the recording studio, I never finish before 2 a.m., and then I have to get up at 7 a.m. for my kids. So there's a lot of sleep deprivation.

Maybe you're an advertisement for never sleeping.

You start to go crazy if you don't sleep. But I definitely don't understand people who sleep 12 hours a day. I see that as the supreme indulgence, people sleeping until noon. How dare they? I never did that when I was a teenager.…

But you've always had goals. You had…

A fire lit under my ass? Yeah, that's true. No time to waste.

Some people don't have as much of a driving purpose.

I guess so. Well, I can't relate to those people.

Did you see the movie "Whiplash"?

I did, I loved it. I totally connected to it and related to it. I watched it with all my kids, and they were all very mesmerized by it, and I think a little bit speechless afterward. My son David was the most vocal about it, because he's just the most vocal of all my children. Doesn't have any agendas. Isn't going through adolescence. He said, "Wow, I want to make my hands bleed." When the character said, "I'd rather be a 34-year-old genius who did something with his life, dead of a heroin overdose, than live to be 93 and do nothing," I totally was like, "Yes." That really resonated with me. Not, you know, the…

Not the self-destructive part.

No, no. But believing in yourself and being willing to do anything, to walk through the fire, to do what it is that you want to do. Getting out of that car accident covered with blood to play the gig… I mean, that's me. That's just me.

But you never had a coach quite like J.K. Simmons' character, I would imagine.

I've had teachers like that, for sure.

There was a dance teacher in high school, Christopher Flynn, who was very important in your life. Was he anything like that?

Oh, yeah. He was brutal. He was ruthless, and he walked around with a stick and he hit you with it. He would say kind of outrageous things: "Don't come to my room and stand like that. Get out of here." He would not tolerate laziness or complaining. He did a lot of things like that guy in the movie. But when you did some-

TOP: LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE

thing right, he did feed you compliments, once in a while. He's the one who said to me, "You have to get out of this place. You have a gift. Go to New York."

If you had never gone to that class, would your path have been completely different?

Well, things would be very different if *lots* of other things didn't happen to me. If my mother didn't die and I grew up with a feeling of wholeness and completeness and family, I probably would have stayed in Michigan and become a schoolteacher. And I was very blessed to have the teachers that I had. My art teacher, my English-literature teacher, and my Russian-history teacher were also key in the guiding of my artistic soul. I went through this whole phase where I wanted to be Georgia O'Keeffe. And one day my art teacher came over to me, and she, like, hit me over the head with this rolled-up piece of paper – all my teachers hit me! – and she's like, "You're terrible! You're never going to be an artist. You're a showgirl, get out of here."

They were kind of my mother figures, as well. Christopher, my ballet teacher, was the first gay man that I met – well, that I knew was gay. He snuck me out when I was in high school to my first gay club, and opened my eyes to a whole world. Not just gay culture, but also just the idea that you could be different.

The "rebel heart" that you sing about, that instinct in you – where do you think it came from?

Being a troublemaker? [*Laughs*] Just growing up in what I considered to be a provincial, suburban, narrow-minded environment. Feeling like I didn't fit in, feeling ostracized. So if people didn't accept me at school, I just would push things even further. I thought, "Well, you already don't like me. So fuck you, I'm going to go even further. How do you like these hairy armpits?" It was just in my DNA. And I didn't have a mother. That probably had a lot to do with it, because it wasn't like my mother was saying, "You shouldn't behave that way." I had a father, I had older brothers. I did have a stepmother, but I didn't have any relationship with her. So there was no role model for me.

You also saw that your brothers were given freedoms you didn't have.

Yeah. My father was very strict with me, and I kept seeing a disparity between their freedom and my lack of it, or how I had all the responsibilities and they had none. And the Catholic Church, all of the rules, and why did I have to wear a dress when they could wear pants? I would say to my dad, "Will Jesus love me less if I wear pants? Am I going to hell?" I wanted to know why people follow rules blindly, or why girls had to act a certain way and boys didn't. Why could boys ask girls out and girls not ask guys out? Why did girls have to shave their legs and guys didn't? Why did society, like, set everything up the way they did? My whole adolescence was full of unanswered whys. Because they never got answered, I just kept lighting fires everywhere – metaphorically speaking.

> **There was a time when I was less provocative – when I was married. My ex was not a fan of me kissing Britney Spears onstage.**

And then as soon as you were in the public eye…

Well, that just continued. Because then I was in the public arena of "Why?" Because then it was like, "Oh, you're dressing like a slut or a whore, so you must be stupid." Or "You're promoting sexuality, so you're a whore and you're just doing this for attention. You have no talent." Again, I was like, "Why? Why can I not be sexual and be intelligent? Why can't I strut around onstage like Mick Jagger and not be pigeonholed as a bimbo? Why?" Again.

Or Prince, at the same time.

Exactly. Thank you, yes.

You responded the same way you did in high school: "You don't like how I'm dressing – how about this? How about this book?"

Same thing. Yeah. My nature is to provoke, that's true. I can't help myself. But it's always with good intentions.

In your 2005 documentary "I'm Going to Tell You a Secret," you called your old self "an idiot," which seems pretty harsh.

Well, there's a lot of idiotic things about my old self *and* my new self. I mean, one's always being an idiot, let's face it.

Have you embraced your old self a little more since then?

Yeah, maybe. Now I don't even remember why I called myself an idiot. I can be very harshly critical of myself. It depends on my mood, and obviously it depends on where I am in my life. Yes, embracing myself – I'm working on that [*laughs*].

Aren't we all?

Aren't we all. Exactly. Well, some people aren't. Yeah. Some people are medicating themselves all the time so that they don't have to embrace themselves. If you can't feel, you can't embrace.

Do you still enjoy provocation? Even now?

Um, yeah [*laughs*]. Would you like me to provoke you? I mean, you're not asking that question because you don't know the answer, right?

Well, there was a time when you were talking as if you'd left that in the past.

Really? Did I say that? I think there probably was a time when I was less provocative. That's when I was married. Yeah.

I didn't make that linkage.

Yeah, make that linkage [*laughs*].

What was it about that marriage that made you feel that way?

Well, I don't think my ex-husband approved of it. Or maybe he didn't understand it. I don't think he understood my provocation. He was not a fan of me kissing Britney Spears onstage, for instance. Was that provocative? I think it was. I mean, now it wouldn't be.

On some level, he must have known whom he was marrying.

Yeah, but I think all of us make the mistake of thinking we're going to change people when we get together. But we're not. People are who they are. And people change in their own time, you know?

During that marriage, you were drinking beer for a while, which is hard to picture.

[*Laughs*] I was, because, you know, when in Rome. And when I lived in England I was embracing all things English,

and I went to pubs a lot. If you go to a pub, you better learn to appreciate ale.

How do you balance your own rebelliousness with being a mother who's trying to get kids…

To do their homework? Well, I say, "You want to change the world? You want to be somebody?" Rocco looks up to people like Bob Marley. My son David looks up to Michael Jackson. And I say, "Being educated is a big part of being a rebel." And also discipline, starting a project and finishing through to the end, is key to making something out of your life.

MADONNA AND KIDS In Malawi, 2013, with children David, Lourdes, Mercy and Rocco (from left)

AMOS GUMULIRA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

That's a good argument. Does it work?

It does work. And then, of course, the other weapon is, "There are kids all over the world who are dying to go to school, who cannot, and here you are complaining about it. Shut up and go to school." They go with me to Africa and they see kids going to a school that I built and see how grateful they are to walk to school in their bare feet and sit in a two-room building on very basic chairs and desks. And they see how grateful they are to learn, and it puts everything in check for them.

Years ago, you were asked what kind of mom you thought you would be, and you said, "Very affectionate, but probably domineering."

What does "domineering" mean, though? Like, bossy? What mother isn't? I mean, I'm very involved in their lives and very opinionated. But my daughter just went to college, and that's a lesson in letting go. I can no longer dominate her. She gets to do what she wants to do, and that has helped me become less domineering.

Unlike a lot of other creative people, you seem to lack a self-destructive impulse.

Everyone has a self-destructive nature in them. It's whether you feed it or not. You don't have to be a pop star to feel connected to destruction or self-destruction. But self-destruction is self-obsession, and self-obsession is not really possible if you're engaged in raising children. And if you have a spiritual life, you're constantly being asked to see yourself as one small fragment in the bigger picture. Also, the idea of service to humanity, putting yourself in situations where people have much less than you do, puts life in perspective.

There's songs on this new record that are spiritual and searching, and other songs that are basically about fucking.

You just said a bad word! Are they about that? I don't know. Maybe you shouldn't take them so literally.

Fair enough.

Would you like to be specific?

Well, there's the song "S.E.X.," for one, and "Holy Water," which is about oral sex.

But whenever I write about sex, I always do it tongue-in-cheek. That's the one thing that people misunderstand grossly about me. "Holy Water" is obviously meant to be funny.

And you do have introspective and sexual songs next to each other on the album, which is interesting.

Originally, I wanted to have two records – one was going to be all of my envelope-pushing, mischief-making, provocative music. And then there was going to be the more romantic side of me, the more vulnerable side of me.

You're showing that you can be spiritually ascendant and also kind of…

Interested in sex?

Yeah, I guess. But also able to sing about it and be…

And why not? But once again, I'm defying the convention that you can't be both, or that you have to be one personality trait. There's no law that says that you cannot be a spiritual person and a sexual person. In fact, if you have the right consciousness, sex is like a prayer. It can be a divine experience. So why do they have to be disassociated with one another?

If it's one theme that you and Prince, once again, have in common, it's that sometime intermingling of…

Sexuality and…

Spirituality, yeah. "Like a Prayer" – was that a deliberate reference just now?

Nope, as I said it, I was like, "Oh, I just referenced one of my songs. How perfect." I've had a teacher I've studied Kabbalah with for years, and we have discussions about sex. I also wanted to understand the Koran, and I was studying Islam with an Islamic scholar. And in the Old Testament, in the Koran, sex is not a bad thing. There are certain religious groups who have turned it into a sinful act. I've always tried to open people's minds to the idea that it's not something to be ashamed of.

You took a lot of flak for moving the culture to where it is now, for things that no longer seem shocking.

Well, think about how crazy everybody went when *Truth or Dare* came out, and now everybody has a reality show, and nobody thinks twice about it. And I got so much shit for my *Sex* book, and no one gives Kim Kardashian a hard time. It's so crazy. So I guess I had to be the scapegoat.

To what extent would you characterize yourself as Jewish? Would that be a good label?

[*Laughs*] No, I don't affiliate myself with any specific religious group. I connect to different ritualistic aspects of different belief systems, and I see the connecting thread between all religious beliefs. I have not converted to Judaism. I've studied Kabbalah, as you know, for many years, so there are a lot of things I do that one would associate with practicing Judaism. I hear the Torah every Saturday. I observe Shabbat. I say certain prayers. My son was bar mitzvahed. So this appears like I'm Jewish, but these rituals are connected to what I describe as the Tree of Life consciousness and have more to do with the idea of being an Israelite, not Jewish. The tribes of Israel existed before the religion of Judaism existed, so you have to do your history.… So, am I Jewish? I mean, some people would say, well, you do a lot of things that Jews do, but I would say I do a lot of things that people did before Judaism existed. And I believe what I practice has to do with something deeper than religion, that it embodies all religions, including Judaism. And Christianity. And Islam.

Well, you're wearing a cross.

I like crosses. I'm sentimental about Jesus on the cross. Jesus was a Jew, and also I believe he was a catalyst, and I think he offended people because his message was to love your neighbor [*Cont. on 64*]

WHY IS THIS MAN STILL IN JAIL?

Half a lifetime ago, Philadelphia cops put Tony Wright away for a brutal crime he didn't commit. DNA tests have exonerated him. But he's still not free

BY PAUL SOLOTAROFF

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RITTER

THROUGH THE ROACH-rife lobby, where bold bugs nose the soles of your shoes and scores of black women sit stiff-backed for hours in scoop chairs shushing their toddlers; through the pat-down room, where the beetle-eyed guard rifles your groin and buttocks; through the metal detectors and slab-steel doors and second and third sets of guards, you enter a room in which young black men are slouched in seating pods, the sleeves of their orange jumpsuits rolled up tight. There, at the back, by the bolt-barred windows, waits the luckiest – and unluckiest – inmate here, a man so bedeviled by the state of Pennsylvania that he inspired famous lawyers in two different states to fight like Hessians for his release. A kid of 20 when the murder cops came and sucked him into this nightmare, he's older than you'd imagined him looking at 43, growing tufts of gray in his billy-goat scraggle and patchwork steel-wool hair. But, built like a boulder, he wraps you in a hug that loudly resets your spine. Here is your reward for the drive to Philadelphia and those hours dodging insects in the waiting room: Anthony Wright, whom this city tried its damnedest to destroy, is a man of patience and implacable peace. No police force on Earth could bend his will now.

We sit beneath a pillar, knee to knee. Small tears stand out on his lashes. He's

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waited 23 years to tell this story, and now that someone's listening, the words won't come, bunched up in that bank vault of a chest. "It's just, you fight and you fight, man.... I wrote 10 letters a day, seven days a week, to anyone I thought might give a damn – and then the day comes that I prayed and prayed on, and now I can't even get it out...."

But who, with Wright's inventory of pain and sorrows, could describe the indescribable that befell him? How do you convey being a strapping young man with a job and a little boy and a lazy Sunday watching football when two cops barge into your life and drag you off to hell? Is there any way to summon a sense of what it was like in that box in the Police Administration Building, where, as you would later tell the court, they chained you to a chair, pressed their hands on your neck and threatened to skullfuck you if you didn't sign a confession that you did not write to the rape and murder of a 77-year-old woman? No call to a lawyer or your terrified mother, no room to breathe in or gather your wits; just hour after hour in a hole with those men and their short-fuse insistence that you sign their paper.

And so you signed just to make it stop, to get out of that room and go anywhere else with the space and the silence to think. It didn't hit you until weeks later that you'd signed your life away; only the doubts of five jurors kept a needle out of your arm and spared you to write your daily stack of mail to strangers around the world. And then one of those letters hit the intake box at the Innocence Project office in New York, and the long, slow frog-march to justice began, a 17-year grind to clear your name and shuck the great stone off your back.

You're almost there now, so close you can taste the street. Your conviction's been thrown out. Though the prosecutors say they are going to retry you, their case is in shambles. DNA tests have excluded you and implicated another man for the rape, and likely the murder, of Louise Talley. In any other city, you'd be promptly released by the district attorney to begin the numbing task of building a life. But this is Philadelphia, a place so poisoned by police misconduct that it long ago lost its sense of shame. So, no, there is no offer of financial reparation and the carefully worded regrets of City Hall. Instead, they've moved you from a state to a county house, where you're thrown among the young bucks awaiting trial in a filthy and full-to-bursting city jail. At night, you bunk down on a cot, the third man stuffed into a two-man cell at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility. One of two major cities in "post-racial" America with a black mayor, a black DA and a black chief of police, Philadelphia has been waging a half-century war against its citizens of color. Small wonder Tony Wright can't bring himself to speak now. Fifty years after the murder of the Freedom Riders, he has a better chance of justice in Philadelphia, Mississippi, than he does in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Contributing editor Paul Solotaroff *wrote about Aaron Hernandez in 2013.*

For most of five decades, bad cops in Philly have fought off accusations of beating, robbing, framing and killing civilians at rates undreamt of in larger cities. Working cheek by jowl with a prosecutor's office that rarely sought indictments against even those cops whose crimes were captured on camera, and a legal-aid system that pays court-appointed lawyers some of the lowest attorney fees in the country, the PPD has run off scandal after scandal and emerged with its culture intact. Two years ago, its cops shot 52 civilians, resulting in 15 deaths. The Department of Justice was brought in to examine the PPD's use of excessive force; its findings have not been released to the public.

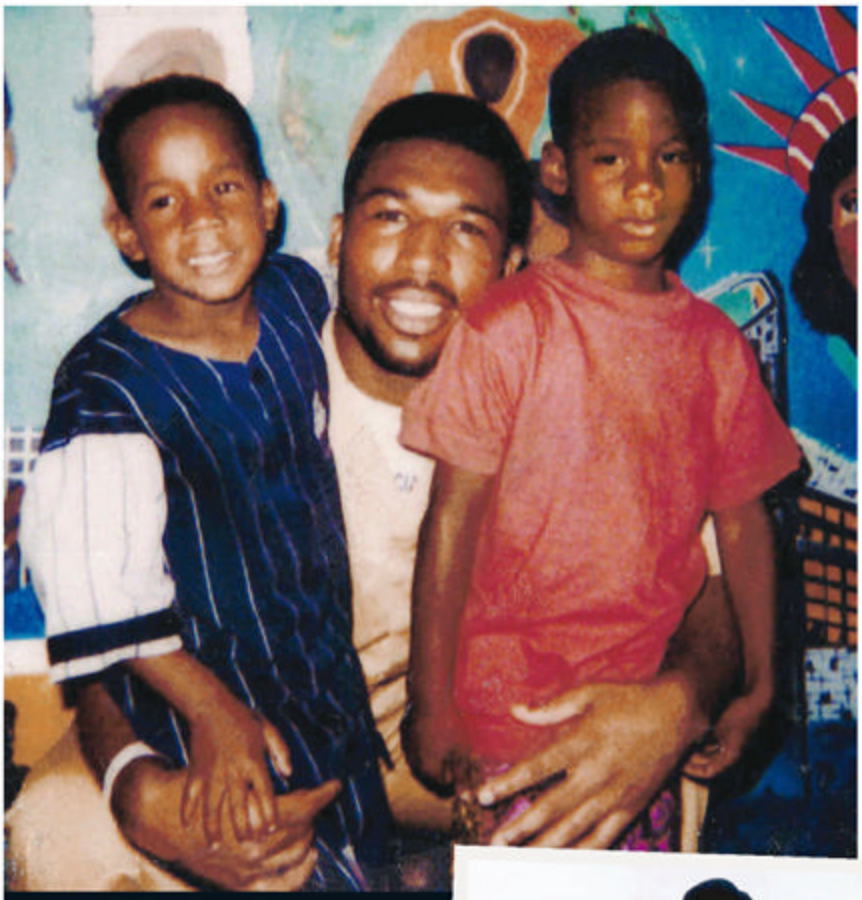
50 YEARS AFTER THE FREEDOM RIDERS, A YOUNG BLACK MAN HAS A BETTER CHANCE OF JUSTICE IN PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, THAN HE DOES IN PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.

In the latest eruption of a decade-long scandal, seven detectives in the Narcotics Field Unit were caught breaking into houses, stealing money from drug dealers, planting evidence and fabricating charges. Elsewhere in Philly, another squad of narcs was brazenly robbing bodegas in broad daylight, swaggering into stores, clipping security-camera wires and helping themselves to the cash on hand. Two *Daily News* reporters, Barbara Laker and Wendy Ruderman, spent 10 months taking statements and hunting down proof – and finally found a shopkeeper with footage of cops clipping his security cameras. "There were five cops caught on camera, and none of them lost their jobs – in fact, one's gotten a couple of big promotions," says Laker, who shared a Pulitzer Prize with Ruderman in 2010 for their series and co-wrote a terrific book (*Busted*) that's currently in production as a TV series. "But the thing that really bothered us was, nothing changed. These cops, and the rest of the department, went on with their lives as usual."

The era of the bully-boy Broad Street cop began in the summer of 1967, when a guns-blazing, two-fisted high school dropout rose from the ranks to become police chief. Frank Rizzo may have been the most uncloaked racist to ever hold office in a Northeast city. Snarling "Get their black asses!" while news cameras ran, he sicced hundreds of riot cops on school kids who were peacefully protesting, bludgeoning dozens of them. He ordered his men to raid the city's Black Panthers headquarters, drag them into the street and strip them butt-naked – then accused them of stripping themselves. For nearly two decades, he dominated this city's ethos, first as police chief, then as the two-term mayor who tried to rewrite the statutes for a third term. By the time he retired to a lucrative second career as a virulent radio host, he'd thoroughly poisoned the well of race relations here and remade a department of 6,500 cops more or less permanently in his image.

One example among many: the highway patrol, a squad of cops in leather and crash helmets that functioned as "Rizzo's own private army," says Paul Conway, chief of the Special Defense and Homicide division at the public defender's office in Philadelphia. "They acted with extreme excessive force for many years. They brought in so many suspects, pretty much all black kids, with bloody head wounds that we called their bandages 'highway turbans.' Rizzo's mantra was, 'Get the confession by any and all means, and I'll back you if you go over the line.'" Bill Marimow, now editor-in-chief of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, won a Pulitzer for uncovering dozens of cases in which suspects were taken to the basement of police headquarters, threatened with pistols or brutally beaten to sign confessions – some taken to emergency rooms with cracked skulls and broken jaws before being wheeled back to booking.

Heads rolled at the department after the exposé ran in 1977, but the culture Rizzo bred – corrupt, jackbooted, contemptuous of the Constitution – was immune to lasting changes. New commissioners came and went, vowing reforms, but were so hamstrung by the union and its political pull that they couldn't get rid of even the most violent cops. Then crack blew in at the end of the 1980s and pumped the murder rate up just over 25 percent, causing a city whose taxpayers were fleeing to Bucks County to fear for its long-term survival. Pressure on the department was fierce and



Family Man

Above: Before he was charged for rape and murder in the fall of 1991, Tony Wright was getting his life together after completing a two-year juvenile-remediation program. With son Tony Jr. (left) that summer. Right: Tony Jr. visits his father in prison last year.

full-throated: Clear the clogged whiteboards of unsolved killings and bring the death toll down. For a rank and file weaned on Rizzo's bruised-knuckle ethos, this meant doubling down on the strong-arm stuff, and no worries if an innocent kid got swept up in the net. The jails, after all, were full of such cases. What did one more come to, for the greater good?

THE GHETTO IN NORTH PHILLY runs, or, more like it, limps for miles on end in a mud-flat sprawl of houses bunched together for warmth. Towers put up to shelter the poor were bulldozed years back as a crime-reduction tactic, and little was built to fill those holes or retain the class of strivers who held things together through the turbulent Sixties and Seventies, the teachers and nurses and auto mechanics who shopped the mom-and-pops and thronged the churches. They're long gone now, dug into enclaves in Germantown and Mount Airy, and with them went the amenities their salaries supported, as well as their moral example. What's left isn't the flash-and-trash blight of Brownsville but something much sadder and more intractable: block after block of boarded windows and doors and the occasional corner store with its roll gate up. North Philly is where the rainbow went to die.

If you're from these streets, you count yourself lucky to have one fair shot to get out. Tony Wright got such a chance, albeit belated, and was well on his way to cashing that ticket when the Philadelphia police force stopped him cold. He was born to a single mother with a world of problems but a strong-willed family to back her up. Marilyn Martin was one of nine kids by Mary and Caesar Wright who were raised in their tidy, single-family Cape Cod seven miles north of Center City. Mary, a widow of 89 who still lives in the house that she and Caesar, a toolmaker, bought for a few thousand dollars in 1965, raised her children to finish school and start careers before they were ensnared by kids and lovers. Five of them earned diplomas and landed good jobs, but Marilyn got pregnant at 17 by a man from around the way named David Parker. The two weren't a couple when Tony was born in 1971, but Parker did his best to be in his son's life, even after moving to Georgia in 1979. "I'd fly him down each summer and Christmastime, show him what life was like in a God-fearing house," says Parker, who now lives in Florida with his wife and has been a chef for 25 years at an upscale chain. "I hated that he lived in chaos up there; when he was with us, he always did a 180."

Marilyn left her folks' house for a drunk named William Martin, whom she married in their short time together. She moved into her mother-in-law's with him when Tony was preschool age: There, she picked up a taste for vodka and after a while began to suffer blackout spells, which spiraled into manic fits. "She'd howl and moan and make no sense – my mom would call me to take her to the clinic" for detox, says Gladys Brown, who, at 65, is the oldest of Marilyn's eight siblings. Recently retired after 42 years with the Department of Veterans Affairs, she's the glue of the family and the go-to resource for her dozens of nieces and nephews. "I had Tony to my house every weekend when he was little and bought him whatever he wanted or needed," Brown says. "He was a sweet, shy boy who never gave me one problem. My heart always hurt for what he went through."

All the love and proxy care in North Philly, though, couldn't save Tony from his mother's mistakes. She split up with Martin and moved on to a man named Harry, who Tony says owned and ran a speakeasy on a devastated block in the misnamed Nicetown section. Drunks rolled in from dusk till dawn, carousing down the hall from where Tony slept. Business was so brisk that Harry stuffed the cash into lawn-and-leaf bags upstairs, and he dressed Tony and his mother like ghetto royals, squiring them around the neighborhood in his Caddy. But Harry, when drunk, was a vicious bully: He whipped Tony bloody for small infractions and treated Marilyn as his punching bag. "Once,

COURTESY OF THE WRIGHT FAMILY, 2

Philly Rules

Left: Detective Martin Devlin in 1994. Devlin wrote out the confession that's now in question, and that Tony says he was forced to sign. Below: Longtime Mayor Frank Rizzo, who ran the city's brutal police department before taking over City Hall in 1972.

he took an ax handle to her for overcooking his steak," says Brown. "Tony couldn't stay there and see her beat like that. He bounced around a bunch and was in and out of class because he was never in one place to get settled."

Left behind in school and left out in lunchrooms, where he was always the new kid at the table, Tony dropped out at 16 and fell in with some corner boys. They turned him on to street drugs, and into an entirely different kind of kid. "Sober, he was still the sweet child I knew, but when he was on that stuff, he'd steal whatever," says Brown. He was arrested for theft; his aunts and uncles tried to intervene by strong-arming him to rehab. But Tony refused, tumbling farther down the black hole of the streets. "All we did was get high and run wild," says Lisa Rambert, Tony's girlfriend then and, by 15, the mother of his child, Tony Jr. Now 43 and sober for the past few years, Rambert recalls him as a bright but volatile teen who you didn't want to step to on the block. "I remember this one dude tried him and Tony hurt him up, knocked him out cold in the street," Rambert says. "Then someone called the cops and Tony bailed, ran to the rooftop and hid."

Someone called the cops again when Tony was 16, reporting a theft at the home of one of his relatives. Cornered in the house, he grabbed a plank of wood, shattering the jaw of an officer named Bohndan Fylystyn before fleeing the scene. He was arrested hours later, hiding on a roof. This was June 1988, when crack crimes ruled the tabloids, and there were calls for Tony to be charged as an adult with the aggravated assault against a policeman. But he was lucky enough to draw Brad Bridge as his lawyer. Bridge, an appeals wizard at the public defender's office, managed to keep the case in family court, enraging the dozens of cops who Tony remembers coming to the hearing to demand an eye for an eye. "The judge there, Petrese Tucker, deferred him to VisionQuest, which was a wilderness boot camp for kids," says Bridge. "It was a very big break for him, given the severity of the offense," but she made it clear he'd go straight to jail if he blew this chance she gave him.

Ronnie Byrd, who DNA tests point to as the culprit

VisionQuest, among the first of the country's tough-love outposts for emotionally troubled teens and chronic offenders, seemed a difficult fit for a kid from North Philly, with its woodland desolation and wagon-train trips across the flat lowlands of the state. But Tony, by all accounts, thrived in his two years away. "He went there a boy and came back full-grown," says Larry Wright, 55, Tony's uncle and mentor. "He was all about helping his mama and little boy." "I know he did good there 'cause they offered him a job, tried to move him to Florida to be a counselor," says Darnell Fischer, Tony's friend since adolescence and the only one he's clung to, post-conviction. "But he wasn't doing his son like his father did him. He came back to Philly to raise him up like a man's supposed to do."

It was May 1991, and Tony had moved home with his mother, who'd broken free of Harry and was renting a house in Nicetown. Larry helped him land a job hauling bags of cement for a builder. Tony learned to hang Sheetrock and work the stucco sprayer, and he came home every Friday with $500, giving a chunk of it to his disabled mother. Meanwhile, his biceps and bulging wallet earned him a lot of love in the clubs. "I tried to get back with him, but there was too many girls," says Rambert. Still, many weekend mornings, he'd be up early to fetch Tony Jr., who was four and mostly living with Rambert's parents. "He'd take me to the barbershop to show me off, then we'd go play games at the arcade," says Tony Wright Jr., now a big-shouldered man of 27 who teaches art to at-risk kids after school.

On his 20th birthday, in August 1991, Tony returned to court for the final disposition of his case, having successfully completed his mandated stint of supervised release. The judge granted Tony his full discharge. He was officially cleared to start fresh.

Less than two months later, a little after 1 p.m. on a fall Sunday, there was a knock on the door while he and a girlfriend were watching football. Two homicide cops walked in and announced there'd been a murder in the area; would he mind coming down to the Police Ad-

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MICHELE FRENTROP; WARREN WINTERBOTTOM/AP IMAGES; COURTESY OF THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

THE INNOCENCE WARRIORS

Hundreds of wrongly convicted prisoners owe their freedom to DNA testing and the tireless efforts of Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld

They met as legal-aid lawyers in the Seventies and came together, a decade later in the Bronx, to free an innocent man from jail, using the then-best technology – blood-type analysis – to overturn a rape conviction. For Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck, the men who'd go on to found the Innocence Project in 1992, that exoneration proved a light-bulb moment, a glimpse at the power of forensic science to trump bad evidence and witness statements. "In those days, there was an awful lot of misused science – bite-mark analysis, hair comparisons, embellished serology – being trotted out in court to get convictions," says Neufeld, 64, sitting in IP's Manhattan offices. "What we needed was a better way of testing evidence."

Scheck (left) and Neufeld

They found that new science – DNA analysis – and first deployed it in 1992 to win the release of a Virginia man serving 45 years for rape. "Using blood types, you can rule out nine out of 10 suspects," says Neufeld. "With DNA, you get a profile that's potentially one in 10 billion, and you can use it on old, or tiny, samples that blood-group analysis can't read."

In 1994, Neufeld and Scheck got a call from a lawyer named Robert Shapiro. His client, O.J. Simpson, had been charged with double murder; could they lend their expertise to evaluate the evidence? "We were reluctant to get involved, but this case was so high-profile," says Neufeld. What they found surpassed even their worst suspicions: shoddy evidence collection by crime-scene cops, incompetent LAPD crime-lab work and misleading witness testimony.

Though the verdict that made them famous was no one's idea of justice, what Scheck and Neufeld showed was that even open-and-shut cases could be built on negligently careless police work. The exposure brought them pleas from thousands of convicts across the country. Since then, 325 convicts have been exonerated by DNA evidence, including 20 death-row inmates. DNA testing wasn't just freeing the wrongly imprisoned, however; in more than 40 percent of these wins, DNA tests identified the real perpetrator, who'd often gone on to commit other crimes while the innocent man sat in jail. This earned Scheck and Neufeld the grudging admiration of police chiefs and legislatures, who have adopted many reforms that IP called for. Among them: granting inmates the statutory right to test DNA evidence, post-conviction; enacting laws requiring the videotaping of all custodial interviews, not just confessions; upgrading standards for witness identifications in lineups and photo arrays.

Their Innocence Network now counts outlets in 46 states and 12 other countries as well. Their mission isn't simply to right past wrongs; it's to prevent the innocent suspects – too often poor people of color – from being caught in the jaws of a prison-industrial complex forever in need of blood to sustain itself. As the Tony Wrights of the world can attest, once you're in, it's hell itself to get out. **P.S.**

COURTESY OF THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

ministration Building to help them out? Stunned, Tony went without asking the basics: Who'd been killed and when? Was he himself a suspect? If so, shouldn't they read him his rights?

A few hours later, he'd sign a full confession to the rape, murder and robbery of Louise Talley. The account was extraordinary in its detail and frankness, right down to the clothes it described Tony wearing when he killed her – a black sweatshirt bearing the Chicago Bulls logo; dungarees with suede patches; and black Filas – and that he'd hidden them in his room. There was just one problem: Not a word of it was true.

THE PREVIOUS AFTERNOON, COPS had been called to a house at 3959 Nice St., three-quarters of a mile from Tony's place. Talley, 77, a widow who kept to herself and tended her small garden, was found on the floor of her upstairs bedroom, naked, bludgeoned and dead from 10 stab wounds. The weapon used to kill her, an eight-inch kitchen knife, was found in the folds of a pink bathrobe beside her; the room, like much of the house, had been tossed. Her murderer, who presumably made off with the two TVs taken from her house, hadn't left any prints on the handle of the knife but, as the cops would later claim, had left a marker nonetheless: fresh semen stains on Talley's rumpled sheets.

Twenty-four years – and multiple defense motions and DNA tests – later, an entirely different picture has emerged: No trace of semen was found on the sheets, but the rape kit that tested negative back then now showed that there had, in fact, been sperm in Talley's rectum and vagina. It wasn't Tony's, however. The sperm belonged to a crackhead named Ronnie Byrd, who sometimes squatted in an abandoned row house right behind Talley's place. Byrd, then 39, had a long list of priors – bad checks, drug busts, possession of stolen goods. But homicide investigators never bothered to run down Byrd. Instead, they brought in Roland St. James, an addict who ran a neighborhood crack house and who was placed near the scene by a witness. Rather than charge him, the cops took – or induced – a rambling statement from St. James that put Tony at the center of the crime. Then, they got St. James' former tenant John "Buddy" Richardson to back his ludicrous story: that Wright was really a zombie crackhead who'd raped and butchered an old woman for the money to feed his binge.

There were two wildly different versions of what happened in the interrogation room. At Tony's trial, Detective Manuel Santiago testified he brought Tony downtown and had barely enough time to read him his rights when, minutes after he sat for questioning, Tony up and volunteered that he killed Talley. That night – according to the statement Tony signed – he'd been at the crack house getting high when he left to recruit Richardson to help him rob Talley's house. Per the confession, Richardson agreed, but said he'd wait outside. So Tony knocked on her door himself and shoved his way in when Talley answered. He'd done the crime alone, describing the murder and theft in full before circling back to the rape of Talley, noting – bizarrely – that he wasn't hard long enough to ejaculate.

From start to finish, the confession went "pretty quick, one and a half to two hours" total, said Santiago at trial. It bears noting that Tony's lawyer, a court-appointed defender by the name of Bernie Siegel, never challenged that story on cross-examination, nor thought to ask the cop what had prompted the young man to freely sign and date his own death warrant. (Before the trial, however, Siegel had filed a motion to have the confession suppressed on the grounds that it was coerced.)

Then there's Tony's version, which he testified to at his trial. The cops hadn't brought him downtown just to ask him

questions. As soon as Santiago took him into the room, he accused him of murdering Talley. Tony told the detective he knew nothing about it, and had both an alibi and witnesses to back that up. He was with a friend, he said, named Joseph Harris at N.A., a nightclub in North Philly. Furthermore, he had worked 10 hours at a construction site the day they claimed he was bingeing. But Santiago, Tony testified, never wrote that stuff down. Instead, after hours of back-and-forth charge and denial, Santiago left the room. Sometime later, two detectives came in and cuffed Tony's hand to the chair. They presented him with a nine-page statement written out in neat longhand by Detective Martin Devlin and demanded that he sign it. Though there was conflicting testimony at trial as to which of the multiple detectives involved in the investigation were in the room, police documents identify Devlin and Santiago as Tony's interrogators that day.

When Tony refused, one of the detectives crouched before him and pressed his nose against Tony's, telling him that he'd pull his eyes out and skullfuck him. The other detective stood behind him, hands pressed against Tony's neck. Panicked, Tony signed or initialed where they told him, though they wouldn't let him read what was on those pages.

Armed with that confession, cops quickly got a warrant to search Tony's bedroom for bloody clothes. That night, they burst into his mother's house, she testified, flashed a piece of paper at her and headed upstairs without giving her a chance to read the warrant. She frantically dialed her sister Gladys. Gladys says she threw a coat on and was there in less than 20 minutes. "When I pulled up on her street, the cops were out the house, sitting in their paddy wagon," Gladys says now. "I demanded to see the warrant, and the cop pointed at the house," gesturing that Marilyn had it. But Marilyn, as she testified, didn't have it, and wasn't given a receipt for the things they removed from Tony's room. She did see what they took, though: some framed photographs from his wall, and the white coveralls he wore to the construction site. As far as she knew, no black sweatshirt or size-11 Filas, no size-36 jeans with suede patches. He had never owned such items.

But those clothes, purportedly found in Tony's room by a detective named Frank Jastrzembski, were crucial pieces of evidence at trial, containing, as they did, small spatters of blood that proved a match for Talley's. On the stand, Tony denied that the garments were his and said he'd never seen them before. Furthermore, the clothes weren't his size: He wore size-nine-and-a-half shoes and had a 38-inch waist.

Aside from his confession and the clothes allegedly recovered from his room, the state had only the testimony of eyewitnesses to make its case. None of the fingerprints lifted from the crime scene were Tony's, and forensic tests were too crude in 1993 to exclude him from the stains on her sheet. There was the testimony of St. James and his crack-house tenant, but their performance on the stand seemed a transparent sham – when they weren't contradicting each other. St. James couldn't even recall telling the cops that Tony had admitted "beating up or stabbing" a lady that night (the prosecutor helpfully showed him his witness statement, whereupon it all came back to him), and he and Richardson disagreed wildly on the events of the evening and couldn't remember what he was wearing when he killed her. Moreover, St. James had an open arrest warrant at the time he gave his statement to police; nonetheless, the cops let him leave the precinct after he implicated Tony.

IF BAD COPS HAVE A REDEEMING FEATURE, IT'S THAT THEY'RE TOO DUMB TO CONCEIVE OF A TIME WHEN TECHNOLOGY WILL CATCH THEM IN THEIR LIES.

The only other eyewitnesses who testified were a pair of teen boys who'd been sitting on a stoop down the block from Talley's house. They claimed to have seen Tony pacing the street before pushing into her place – but on every other important point, they disputed each other before one of them, Shawn Nixon, admitted, on cross-exam, that it was too dark to make anyone out. Twenty years later, they'd both recant their statements. According to sworn statements from Innocence Project investigators, the boys claimed detectives had coerced them into testifying as they had. The other teen, Gregg Alston, was told he'd never see his mother again if he didn't testify that he'd seen Tony enter Talley's house that night; Nixon said that he, too, felt compelled by the detectives to make his statement. This broke every rule in the police conduct book: Not only weren't their parents present, as is usually required, Nixon's mother, as she told the investigator, wasn't even informed that her son had testified at trial.

It was largely on the strength of the confession and bloody clothes, then, that a jury found Tony guilty of murder one and sentenced him to life without parole. He was shipped out to Graterford, a particularly bad state penitentiary. Housed for a dozen years there before he was sent to another prison, he spent each day in the library, teaching himself the law from old textbooks. For years, his mother made the hourlong bus ride, bringing Tony Jr. on weekends. But the booze and the heartbreak wreaked hell on Marilyn's system. In 1999, she went into a diabetic coma, and lingered for a month on life support before dying at 45.

Five years later, Tony got a letter from the Innocence Project, informing him that, yes, they'd take his case. It was the longest of long shots, a gift from on high: With a total of nine lawyers in its New York office handling DNA cases, IP has accepted less than three percent of the 45,000 pleas it has received. "It wasn't a hard call with Tony," says Nina Morrison, his IP lawyer for the past nine years. "There was the rape kit and clothing to do testing on, and a very stilted confession that was too pat to be believable. Basically, one of two things was true: Either he was guilty, or one or more police officers had committed serious misconduct in putting an innocent man away."

Meanwhile, Ronnie Byrd – the man now implicated in Talley's rape and murder – went on to commit crimes for two more decades before succumbing to chronic illness in 2013. His arrest record runs to the dozens of pages, a crack-fueled trail of thefts and break-ins that took him to South Carolina. But by the time Byrd was identified through the national DNA database, he was in a hospital on life support and never roused from his coma before dying. Richardson and St. James, the crack-house denizens, also died while Tony Wright was in jail; the street they darkened is all but gone now, burned or bulldozed to brown-dirt lots.

For the detectives who helped put Tony in prison, though, things could scarcely have gone better. After long careers, they each retired in middle age with gold shields and presumably handsome city pensions. Santiago landed an elite job in the Pennsylvania attorney general's office, working on a task force to curb gun violence. Devlin left Philly for New Jersey, where he joined the Camden County prosecutor's office, rising to commander of the Major Crimes Unit. Jastrzembski went to work as a security manager at the Philadelphia offices of PNC Bank.

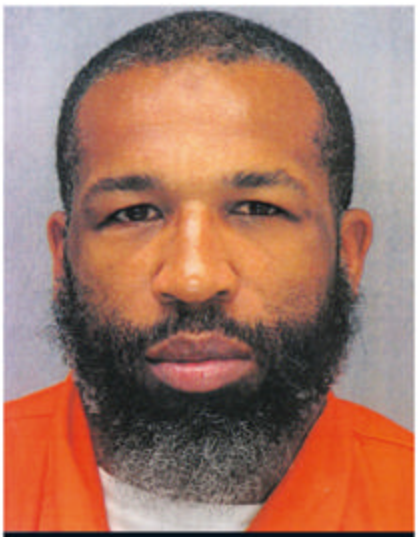
But if there's one redeeming feature in bad cops, it's this: They're too dumb or cocky to conceive of a time when technol-

ogy will catch them in their lies. After Tony's trial, the detectives neglected to make the evidence disappear. And so – amazingly – the articles of clothing were still in city storage when Morrison, Tony's Innocence Project attorney, succeeded, after six years of litigation, in getting them tested with STR analysis, which can pick up DNA from dead-skin cells. Lo and behold, the truth was revealed: The clothes had been worn by the dead woman, not Tony Wright. In conjunction with DNA tests on the rape kit, which excluded Tony and pointed to Byrd, the crackhead, only one scenario seemed plausible now: The cops had taken the clothes from Talley's bedroom shortly after her murder, held them till they brought Tony Wright downtown, then lied about finding them in his room.

So what do we know of these cops? About Devlin, there's a good deal in the public record concerning his role in dubious convictions. Jackie Combs Jr., now in his mid-40s, has spent half his life in prison for a murder he denies committing, after Devlin and other detectives bullied four young witnesses to testify against him in court. According to a report by the *Philadelphia City Paper* in 2000, the witnesses, who gave varied accounts of the killing, were nonetheless clear about the cops' conduct, citing jail threats, and physical and verbal abuse. (Devlin denied their charges under oath, telling a reporter that such claims were "part of doing business.") One of those witnesses, just 15 at the time, told reporters she felt "it's my fault, because I changed my story, saying this man killed this guy [and] knowing he didn't do it."

Worse, there's the case of Walter Ogrod, a trucker with a low-average IQ, who was sentenced to death for the murder of a four-year-old girl. Ogrod "had driven all night and hadn't been to bed in 36 hours when Devlin went to work on him in the box," says Tom Lowenstein, a former Innocence Project New Orleans investigator who's writing a book about the case. "An hour or so into it, according to Devlin, Ogrod supposedly burst into tears and gave a 16-page confession of how he killed the girl." In an article for the *City Paper*, Lowenstein detailed Ogrod's side of the story: He was sweated by Devlin and a second detective, he says, for a dozen hours, while they suggested repeatedly that he was sick in the head and blocking all memory of the murder. He finally broke from lack of sleep, Lowenstein reported, and began to believe what they fed him – signing the statement written out in longhand by Devlin. However, after hearing Ogrod's testimony, 11 of 12 jurors voted to acquit before a mistrial was declared. At a retrial three years later, the confession came back in, and this time, with the aid of a notorious jailhouse snitch, the state convicted Ogrod of capital murder. Housed on death row now for 18 years, he's appealed his conviction through his federal defenders, seeking DNA tests of the evidence.

Next up, Santiago: "I got him dead to rights for faking a witness statement and bullying a nonwitness to testify falsely," says Marc Bookman, a former public defender and a leading consultant on capital cases. "It was a murder case right around the trial of Tony Wright." The cops had a kid who saw the shooting, but because he had warrants out for his arrest, he signed under his friend's name: David Glenn. As the hearing approached, the cops went out and picked up the actual David Glenn. At the station, Santiago bullied Glenn into saying he saw the crime, and identifying



Sitting in Limbo

Tony Wright in prison last year. With his conviction overturned, the DA is vowing to retry him.

the defendant's photograph. "This David Glenn gets up on the stand and sets fire to their whole damn case," says Bookman. "He says, 'That isn't my writing and I never saw the shooting. [Santiago] made me sign that or he'd arrest me.'"

When the defense attorney brought this to the DA, Santiago lawyered up, threatening to plead the Fifth if he was put to the stand. The DA dropped the case, setting the defendant free, while Santiago went back to business as usual. In 1989, a young man named Andrew Swainson was convicted of murder on the statement of a single eyewitness. Nineteen years later, that witness recanted, saying he hadn't seen Swainson at the time of the shooting, and only knew what he looked like because he'd been shown his picture by Santiago in a photo lineup. How did he pick Swainson out of the pile? Simple: All seven photos Santiago showed him were of Swainson. Twenty-six years later, Swainson sits in jail, waiting for lawyers to help get his tainted conviction overturned.

Then there's the third man, Detective Frank Jastrzembski, whose search of Tony's bedroom allegedly produced the bloody clothing. As the lead investigator in the murder of a girl days after Talley was killed, Jastrzembski so botched the seizure of evidence – clothing – that his work was savaged by the Supreme Court judge who overturned the conviction 18 years later and freed the defendant, Jimmy Dennis, from death row. In a blistering decision, Judge Anita Brody said the PPD "covered up evidence" that "pointed away" from Dennis' guilt, suppressed key witness statements, and staged sham suspect lineups. She especially bored in on Jastrzembski's police work, saying garments had been taken from Dennis' home and never itemized or photographed, before being lost mysteriously before trial. Nonetheless, Jastrzembski had brazenly taken the stand and said the clothes matched the kind worn by Dennis the day he shot the girl.

Most of the facts about Tony's case were known, or knowable, by the time of his trial in 1993, and it might have made for great theater had his attorney raised them on cross-examination of the cops. But Siegel, Tony's court-appointed lawyer, never interviewed, much less summoned to the stand, the co-workers who backed his story ("We all wanted to testify for him," says his Uncle Larry, "but nobody called us to court"); seldom spoke to or visited his client in jail after he took the case; and seemed mainly interested in a plea-bargain deal that would get Tony life in prison. Why? Perhaps because he thought the case was unwinnable. Or perhaps because the city paid defense lawyers just $1,800 to prepare a capital murder case. The only feasible way to earn a living off those fees is to stack up cases and do the minimum on each.

Siegel tried to get Tony to take a plea deal, and brought in Brad Bridge, his juvie lawyer, to talk "sense" to him in jail. "But I got nowhere fast," says Bridge, "which struck me as odd for someone facing a needle." If Tony had slain Talley or simply burgled her house while Ronnie Byrd raped and killed her, he'd have had a huge card to play before trial: the name of his accomplice on which to trade. Instead, he sat in a cell for two years, determined to have his day in court. On what planet would someone keep silent and risk death to protect the neighborhood crackhead – a homeless man who was twice his age and whom he's never met, even in passing?

It'll be a salient question to put before a jury, if the state actually goes ahead with its vow to retry Tony for Talley's murder. In a statement to Rolling Stone, District Attorney R. Seth [*Cont. on 67*]

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Rock at his home in Troy, Alabama, in January

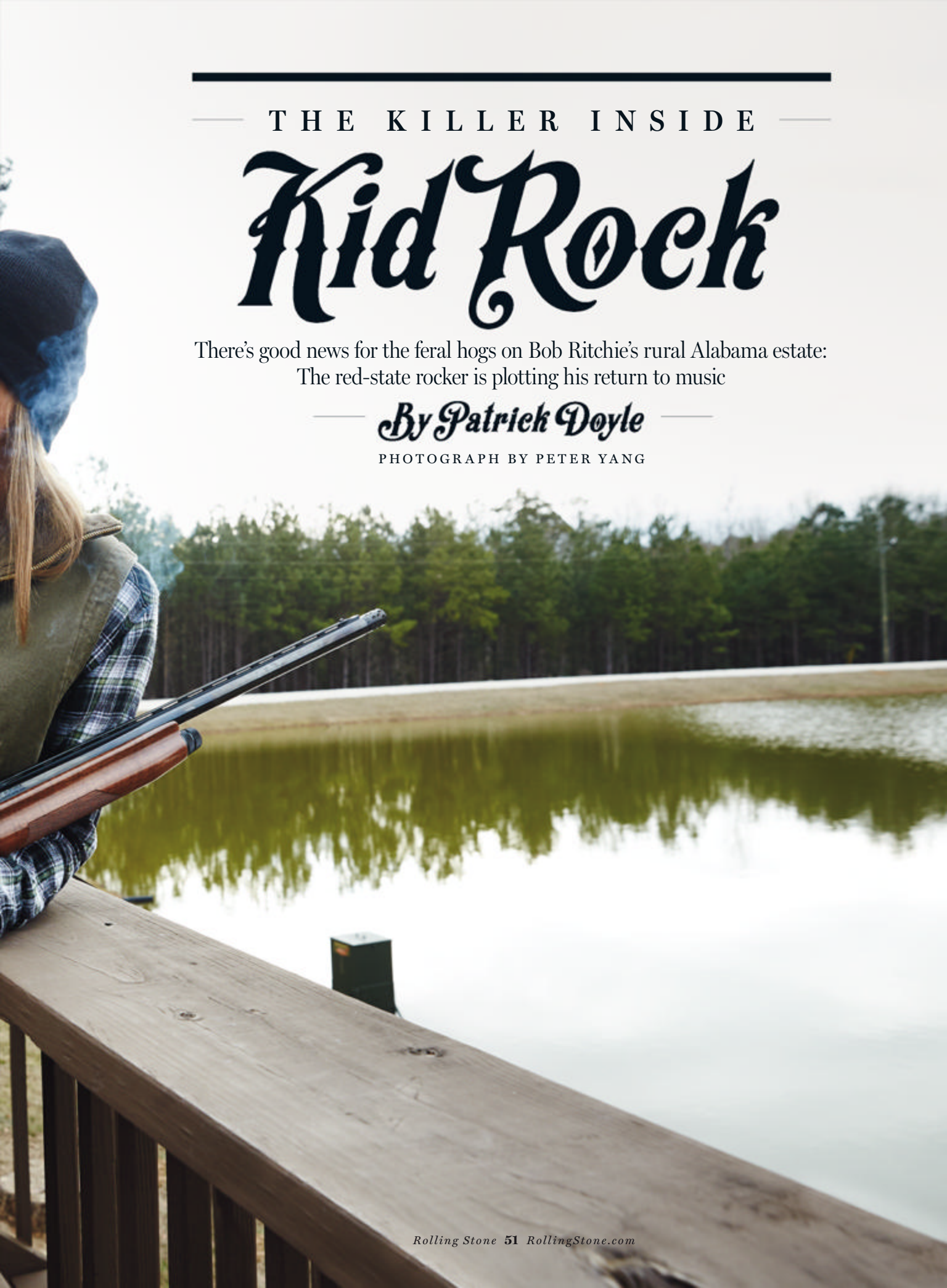
THE KILLER INSIDE

Kid Rock

There's good news for the feral hogs on Bob Ritchie's rural Alabama estate: The red-state rocker is plotting his return to music

By Patrick Doyle

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER YANG



TEN MILES OUTSIDE TOWN ON A TWO-LANE county road, just past the trailer park and across the street from Hank Williams Jr.'s place, there's a driveway with a poster that says RE-ELECT SHERIFF RUSSELL THOMAS. Beyond a gate, a dirt road winds around a small lake, past a DON'T FEED THE HIPPIES sign, leading to a brown double-wide trailer (WiFi password: Troublewide). Kid Rock stands outside puffing a cigar, his ponytail spilling out of an orange hunter's hat. "Welcome to L.A.!" he says, meaning Lower Alabama. "I thought you were coming yesterday. We got our days screwed up. We cooked fuckin' chitlins!"

It's noon on a sunny Thursday in Troy, seat of Pike County. Rock introduces his buddy Gabe, a portly local salesman who sold Rock a dog. They've been hunting on Rock's 500-acre property since 5:30 a.m. He started e-mailing me at dawn, urging me to come early, promising "a badass surprise." "I wanna tell you what it is so bad," he says. He steps into the trailer; a photo of Hank Jr. hangs on the wall near two mounted deer heads. "I guarantee you ain't seen this before."

As Gabe makes turkey sandwiches and Rock makes small talk, his girlfriend, Audrey, arrives in a pickup truck, just back from Walmart. Rock spotted Audrey, a no-nonsense brunette, five years ago at a Michigan restaurant and asked her out on the spot. The next day, when she asked where they were eating, he said Chicago. They had a blast, and have been going strong ever since. Audrey spends much of her time here now; she loves to hunt, though she had to take a break a few months ago when she broke her leg in a nighttime ATV crash.

Rock heads across the road to his huge barn, a man cave decked out with a pool table, a full bar and a safe stocked with guns: a .22 rifle, two custom .45 pistols with ivory handles inside a case marked AMERICAN BADASS SET, and a semiautomatic with a silencer. "Guys with the president carry this," he says. "You have to get these pre-1985 with a silencer. I bought it when Obummer came into office, because I'm thinking, 'What if he fuckin' bans guns?'"

Rock loads a few of them into one of his four-wheelers and we head into the woods, cruising his ragged dirt roads. He's installed several cameras in trees to keep track of wildlife from his barn: deer, coyotes, bobcats – and lately, feral hogs, which have been damaging his property. He points out a torn-up stretch of grass. "A nice green field – they fucked it all up," he says. Then we reach the clearing with Rock's badass surprise: a small cage trap containing three fat, wide-eyed hogs. They wandered into it this morning, lured by the corn inside. "See that?" he says with a grin. "We're about to do some murderous shit."

> ROCK KNOWS HIS FAN BASE: "45-50-YEAR-OLD GIRLS WHO'RE WEARING EXTRA-LARGE T-SHIRTS. MY BREAD AND BUTTER."

ROCK, WHOSE REAL NAME is Bob Ritchie (most friends call him Bobby), fell in love with Pike County on hunting trips with Hank Williams Jr., a local hero thanks to his rowdy anthems and unabashed conservative politics; his father, country pioneer Hank Williams Sr., is buried about 35 miles away, in Montgomery. Two years ago, when Hank Jr. mentioned that a neighbor's neglected property was for sale, Rock agreed to buy it sight unseen. "Great people, man – just small-town America," Rock says. "If World War III breaks out, you know where I'll be." There's a nearby landing strip for his private jet, so he can easily travel to his houses in Michigan, Malibu, Nashville (where he also lives out of a double-wide) and Florida. "No security," he says of the strip. "Just drive a pickup truck onto the tarmac, leave your keys in the car, get on the plane."

Hank Jr. taught Rock the lay of the land. "The snakes around here are bad news, and this area really has a lot of them," says Williams, who is 65. "You gotta know what the hell you're doing down here. You don't put your hand under a boat. We're not having pizza over on Long Island."

Rock has spent some of his favorite nights at Williams' place with singer Jamey Johnson, who owns property on a nearby golf course. "I ain't never met a stranger down here – and nobody's stranger than me and Bobby," Johnson jokes.

Recently, the pair's friendship was tested when Johnson asked to use Rock's land to hunt with his daughter, and then overstayed his welcome. "He brought in a bunch of fuckin' hillbillies," Rock says. "They were living by the creek – tents set up, riding around trying to kill shit. I got really pissed. I'm like, 'Jamey, have you ever heard of insurance?' I had to tell them to get the fuck off my property." (Johnson agrees: "I moved into his woods out there for a while. It was what started off to be maybe five or six people, but it turned into about 20 or 30. I agreed with Bobby. It was just time.")

"THEY'RE GONNA START charging," Rock warns as we approach the hogs. "If for some reason they get out, jump up in back of [the truck]. They'll cut your ass." Because hogs are a non-native species with high reproductive rates, hunters are encouraged to kill them year-round. Rock has been trying to catch some for three months.

Two light-colored sows and a small boar huddle together in the back of the cage. As we get closer, they get jittery, walking in circles around one another, grunting and crashing.

"Let me knock this one out with my 9-mil first," Rock says, reaching into his holster. He points the pistol between one

Associate editor PATRICK DOYLE *wrote about Sam Smith in February.*

ROCKIN' IN THE FREE WORLD

Left: Rock, girlfriend Audrey and unlucky feral hogs at his Alabama home. Below: Rock and son Junior, himself an aspiring singer, 2013. "I was wild," says Rock of Junior's childhood. "I didn't hide that. But I showed up."

of the sow's eyes. "Bye," he says, firing. It collapses and writhes on the ground, running in place on its side for several seconds, its hooves rattling the cage. "His ass is done."

The other pigs go silent. One rubs its snout on the dead sow. Rock hands a rifle to Audrey, showing her where to aim at the blond boar. "Ah, they stink!" she says, sticking the gun into the cage and firing. "Poor thing! Sorry, buddy."

Rock shoots the third. It falls, stays still, then lurches back up, blood spilling from behind its ear. He shoots again. "Two to the head with a .45 and it's still kicking," he says. "That's unbelievable."

Everyone surveys the damage. Rock takes a photo and sends it to Hank Jr. Some locals will come by later to purchase the hogs. "The blond one is pretty," says Audrey.

"Pretty dead," Rock says with a chuckle. "Well, there's some excitement to get the day started!"

ROCK'S ALABAMA GETAWAY inspired much of his new album, *First Kiss*. He wrote songs like "Drinking Beer With Dad," a winding, melancholy track about watching his son grow up, on his Troy porch over a cigar and coffee. Rock, 44, sings about cruising Southern back roads and sipping Jim Beam at juke joints on "Good Times Lookin' for Me," and he salutes gun-loving, denim-wearing women on "Johnny Cash." "Jesus and Bocephus" is a spare, fiddle-steeped hymn that pays tribute to the Bible and getting stoned listening to Hank Jr. "There are a few on this record I think are really special," Rock says.

One day during a recording session in Michigan, Rock and his band were arguing about who played slide guitar on "Like a Rock" – so Rock texted his friend Bob Seger to ask the man himself. Seger ended up coming over, and Rock played him a singalong he called "FOAD," a.k.a. "Fuck Off and Die." Seger loved the melody but hated the lyrics. "He's like, 'Dude, you fucking ruined that song – that's a hit!'" Seger rewrote it as "Say Goodbye," a ballad about the fear that a breakup could be the mistake of a lifetime. "He called me the next morning and said, 'Hey, what do all women want in life?' I'm being a smartass, I'm like, 'A big dick and a new car.' He said, 'No! They want to be remembered forever! And I'm going to give it to you because you've been so nice to me.'" Rock couldn't decide which version he liked better, so he ended up putting both on the album.

Rock will take the songs on the road to amphitheaters this summer: "I'm the Jimmy Buffett with hair who swears." He'll help fans save their beer money by holding prices down to $20 a ticket, like he did last time out. "I'm going to ride that into the sunset," says Rock. "The only obstacle is Ticketmaster adds an extra $5. Fuckin' whores." At this point, Rock knows who his audience is: "45-50-year-old girls wearing extra-large T-shirts – they're my bread and butter. They know how to fucking party – 'I don't give a fuck, I'm making a T-shirt and putting sequins on it. I'm saving my money for beer and having a good time.'"

Rock sometimes seems like a right-wing politician catering to his base. He won't play Europe or mainstream U.S. festivals, but he will play SeaWorld. His fans love it when he shouts things like "Fuck Radiohead" onstage or attacks mainstream pop. He's "flabbergasted" by Beyoncé worship. "Beyoncé, to me, doesn't have a fucking 'Purple Rain,' but she's the biggest thing on Earth. How can you be that big without at least one 'Sweet Home Alabama' or 'Old Time Rock & Roll'? People are like, 'Beyoncé's hot. Got a nice fucking ass.' I'm like, 'Cool, I like skinny white chicks with big tits.' Doesn't really fucking do much for me."

Rock could have had a country career after his 2001 hit with Sheryl Crow, "Picture" – he is routinely asked to co-write with Nashville's top songwriters – but he's not interested. "In country, those award shows make your career . . . and I don't suck dick," he says. "I'll tickle your balls a little bit. But I ain't gonna suck your dick."

Still, Rock wants another big song, something he hasn't had since 2010's heartland anthem, "Born Free." He writes off his last album, 2012's *Rebel Soul*: "It fucking flopped. Before that, I had never not been platinum. I should just go smack somebody at the Waffle House. That worked out great." Days after 2007's *Rock N Roll Jesus* came out, Rock and some of his entourage were arrested for getting into a brawl with a customer. "The judge said, 'What were you doing at the Waffle House at five in the morning?' and I'm like, 'We're drinking. Who goes to Waffle House sober?'

"Watching the news, it was like, *'Kid Rock – his album just came in at Number One – was in a fight last night.'* It was like, 'I should just go smack somebody when my record comes out! I think I should get caught in Malibu firing my cannon on the

FROM LEFT: PATRICK DOYLE; ANDREW HETHERINGTON/REDUX

Fourth of July. They'd raise a stink in California and send me to jail and shit. How could that not be cool?"

ROCK HAS ALWAYS KNOWN how to get attention. He remembers riding around Detroit in the Nineties in a Cadillac painted with gold flames, alongside Joe C., his three-foot-nine hype man, along with "my black girlfriend at the time, who had a body like Jessica Rabbit.

"There's probably photos of it somewhere," he adds. "The caption should've been, 'Somebody look at me! Over here!'" Before he became a star, Rock would decorate his stage with stolen liquor-store signs and burst out of a pyramid made of peg boards and construction paper. "People were like, 'What the fuck's the matter with this kid? He thinks he's in a stadium!'" Rock's dad, who owned a Lincoln-Mercury dealership, didn't approve; he wanted his son to take over the family business. "He would ask, 'Why would you want to be a nigger?'" says Rock. "But I've seen him change, and he couldn't be more proud. Now he's crying after shows."

Rock's rapping and flashy turntable skills earned him a deal with Jive Records, but his 1990 debut album, the straight-hip-hop *Grits Sandwiches for Breakfast,* tanked. He added rock riffs to 1993's *The Polyfuze Method* (he calls it a "drug record"). He started growing his hair out; on the strength of independent sales and packed shows, he was signed to Atlantic in 1998. By then, Rock was a single father – his girlfriend, Kelley Russell, gave birth to their son, Robert Ritchie Jr., whom Rock calls Junior, when Rock was 22. "He was pretty much dropped off at my door at six months old: 'You raise this fucking kid,'" says Rock. "I was like, 'This has gotta work.' So what's popular? Korn. I knew I can do that shit in my sleep. But let me throw in 'Only God Knows Why' and 'Cowboy' so I can have a career."

Hearing that Carson Daly was a fan, Rock showed up at the MTV Beach House in Jersey on the remote chance he could get on TV. After Sugar Ray bailed one day, Rock got on camera as a DJ. "We were working for it, just kind of showing up and hanging out," he says. "We were sucking big cocks."

While radio stations were reluctant to play Rock, MTV did. The video for "Bawitdaba" – with Rock screaming his name over a Gregorian-style chant and rapping in a trailer park while sidekick Joe C. plays football with schoolkids – became an immediate hit in 1999. Rock remembers picking up the five-year-old Junior from school every day and turning on *TRL,* where Rock was getting played alongside Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys. "We'd see the video and be like, 'We're getting a new fucking house! We're getting a new car!'" he says.

COUNTRY ROCK

Top: Rock in Austin last year. Above: Rock and neighbor Hank Williams Jr., 2001: "Me and Bob have been brokenhearted together bawling and I'm trying to help him."

Devil Without a Cause, from 1998, went on to sell nearly 10 million copies; the next year, he was performing "Bawitdaba" at MTV's Spring Break as models paraded around him.

Rock contends he could have made a lot more money during his pop peak. At the time, he was going through a custody battle with Russell (which he settled in 2000; Rock says he charged her $25 a week in child support), and only toured on weekends. "I'd be driving the field trip Monday after I banged, like, four hookers," he says. "Well, not hookers, but, you know, four nice girls on Saturday night in Cincinnati.

"He knew I was wild," Rock says of his son. "I didn't hide any of that. But it was kind of our dirty little secret together. He saw girls come in and out, which probably wasn't the healthiest thing. I tried not to do it too much, but fuck, I had a dick and I was famous at that time, you know? I can only talk about this now, since he's 21. I wish I could've talked about it, said, 'Hey, I was wild. But I showed up to work on Monday to be a father.'"

Junior is now in his final year at Belmont University in Nashville and is pursuing a music career himself. A couple of weeks from now, Junior will become a father. "He really is a great kid," says Rock. "That's my best accomplishment by far. I'm nervous for him, because I know it's a lot of work. But he's got a good girl. I'm excited for him, but he's gotta give up a lot of shit to have to take care of that baby. I said, 'You know how your friends are telling you I'm fucking rich? I fucking am. You're not. And if I wrote you a check, it'd be doing a disservice to you. I'm rooting for you, but I need to stand by the sidelines and watch it go down.'"

THERE ARE SOME DAYS when Bob Ritchie doesn't feel like being Kid Rock. "If I'm not in the mood to have a good time, then I'm not around people," he says. "I've learned to go, 'Bob, are we in a bad mood today? Maybe we shouldn't go to Walmart." (Hank Jr. says he's been with Rock for dark moments: "Me and Bob have been really quite brokenhearted together, sitting there bawling and I'm trying to help him.") But the Rock most people see has few social inhibitions. He's friends with cops and imprisoned gang members, Mitt Romney ("He's the most decent motherfucker I've ever met in my life") and Eminem. Cruising the well-maintained roads on Hank Jr.'s 1,500-acre property, he's full of stories: his debaucherous three days with Axl Rose a few years ago – "I was like, 'Why's everyone think this guy's a dick? He's the nicest guy on Earth!'" – or the time Eminem and Seger recently hung out together at Rock's Detroit place. "Em's just sitting in the corner – me, Em and Bob – and they're trying to relate, but they're

FROM TOP: © J. DENNIS THOMAS/CORBIS; LARRY HILL/ZUMAPRESS.COM

both a little kooky.... Eminem's funny as shit, man. He's a great father, he's funny, he's talented out his ass, but you know, obviously, my social skills are much more developed."

At his Malibu house (which he bought during his relationship with Pamela Anderson), he holds dinners with unlikely combinations of friends: Sean Penn and Mike Diamond, Josh Groban, and, recently, Lionel Richie. "He said, 'I just got knighted in France,'" says Rock. "And I went, 'Lionel, do you know how to play the bigger-dick game?' He goes, 'Hell, yeah.' I run to my bedroom, I bring out my NAACP Award and go, 'Boom.' He goes, 'You just beat me at the fucking bigger-dick game!' By the end of the night, me and Lionel were going to start a restaurant in California called Dem Ritchie Boys."

Lately, Rock has been getting into golf. He was just accepted into Jack Nicklaus' private Bear's Club, near Palm Beach, Florida. "If you told me five years ago I'd have to take my hat off and tuck my shirt in, I'd have slapped the taste out of your mouth," Rock says. "Now I'm like, 'Look at me, hair slicked back, shirt tucked in.' I'm like, 'What a fag!'" Rock recently got some pointers at the range from Nicklaus himself, and he hit balls at Tiger Woods' nearby house. "Nice kid," Rock says. "A little bit of an Eminem and Axl Rose syndrome. Very reclusive, literal, and sometimes you feel a little bad for them. Sometimes they think the world's against them. You gotta loosen up, man! People are gonna talk shit. You just gotta enjoy it!"

Tonight, Rock won't be hosting any famous friends. "We got a bunch of hillbillies coming by," he says, gathering twigs in the woods for a bonfire he's having trouble starting. "This should be hotter than a fuckin' two-dollar whore's ass."

"Whoa, whoa," says Audrey, cracking a beer.

"Sorry – three-dollar."

Rock ducks inside his barn to respond to an e-mail approving a local Detroit ad for his American Badass Beer Co. "Cool," he writes. "There's my work for the day," he says.

Local folks filter into Rock's big pinewood barn, which is outfitted with leather couches, a giant taxidermy bear (a gift from sandwich-shop mogul Jimmy John), a tiger rug and a chandelier made of antlers. There's Forrest, who works at a local hunting store; Donna, who is Hank Jr.'s housekeeper; and Greg, who worked at the phone company for 18 years. "People forget about places like this in America," Rock says. He recently brought three local friends on their first trip to New York to act as his security at *The Tonight Show*. "To me, it just looked cool, walking in with these Alabama boys with black shirts," he says. "I'm like, 'I look like the baddest motherfucker.'" His friend Kent says, "You don't know how much that trip meant to me."

As a host, Rock is easygoing but watchful, asking guests to lose their shoes when they come inside. He notices when I put my jacket on a stool, asking me to put it on a coat rack instead, "to set a good example." Audrey cranks Miranda Lambert's *Platinum* and serves a venison pasta dinner. Rock teaches a friend's son how to play pool, and holds foot races with two little girls.

He cues up video of the hog execution on his Apple TV. Watching the second hog get shot and rattle the cage, one guy says, "It sounds like they're playing the drums for you, Bob! They wanted you to sing to 'em!"

> HE'S "FLABBERGASTED" BY BEYONCÉ WORSHIP: "HOW CAN YOU BE SO BIG WITHOUT A 'SWEET HOME ALABAMA' OR 'PURPLE RAIN'?"

Smoking a cigar in his garage next to a TED NUGENT FOR PRESIDENT bumper sticker, Rock glances at his phone. "Sarah Palin just sent me a text," Rock says. Palin had heard that Rock surprised a superfan, who has Down syndrome, at his 30th-birthday party. "She was like, 'That was cool.' I'm like, 'If you were me, you would've done the same thing.'"

BACK IN THE BARN, ROCK starts playing pool and shows one of his buddies a game he learned as a teenage hustler. He drops a 20 on the floor, asking his friend to call heads or tails. He loses; now he owes Rock $20. "Don't ever play that game again," Rock yells. "It's so sadistic. That game will fuck your life up. You see that? I can sit there all night with money in my pocket – one more time! I can win every time, because I have fuck-off money. The house always wins."

It's after 2 a.m. Most guests have filtered out (one woman is passed out on the couch), but Rock, who's been up for nearly 24 hours, seems to get more energy as the night wears on. He makes a drink at the bar, stocked with American Badass Beer and Jim Beam, and sits down on a barstool by Greg, a husky guy in a camouflage visor. Rock asks him what he thinks of unions. "It's good for the workin' man," Greg drawls after some hesitation.

"But people take advantage of it, right?" Rock asks. "You're one of the guys, I can see, you worked your ass off for it. You go into work every day and work your ass off and see the motherfuckers who take advantage of it."

Rock starts talking about the seven trips he's made to the Middle East to entertain troops. "I spent two Christmases there... slept in Saddam's bedroom," he says. Those trips affirmed Rock's political beliefs. He's pro-torture in some situations, and he sees gun ownership as a sacred right. "Getting rid of them is not the answer," he says. Adds Greg, "If all the guns were taken from American citizens, the only ones who would have guns would be the damn outlaws."

"The guy who got Osama bin Laden was on Fox News," Rock says. "His daddy raised him in Montana, hunting, fishing. He got it from hunting. What that kid knows is fucking invaluable. Shooting 200 yards is hard. To be able to make 1,000-yard shots? I'm glad we have some people like that on our side."

"Would you go fight for this country if they called you?" he asks.

"Yeah," Greg says.

"I would too. That's what most people don't understand. And I would send my son. You gotta go."

Greg tells a story about a friend who served three tours overseas. He went back again two years ago, shortly after recovering from a serious injury. Greg hasn't heard from him since: "I won't tell you how many times I tried to get in touch with him. A lot of times I can't sleep at night. I go watch the sun come up. He should be 41 now. He had no damn business going back."

"While we are sitting around drinking beer and whiskey, those guys fucking gave their lives," says Rock. "Then you go to Walter Reed hospital and you see these kids and their mothers..." It's quiet for a long time, until he starts choking up. A couple of tears run down his face. For the first time all day, he's silent.

Greg looks at his watch. It's past 4:30 a.m. "It's about that time, isn't it?" he says. Rock nods and heads to bed. Audrey's brother, who's in the military, is coming tomorrow for his weekend off. Rock needs to get some rest to do it all over again.

Banquet

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Same Pop Rebel, Hot New Moves

Madonna gets down with Kanye, Avicii and more on a supercatchy, sexed-up album

Madonna

Rebel Heart

Boy Toy/Live Nation/Interscope

★★★½

BY CARYN GANZ

For many years, Madonna avoided the Internet like gluten. But in December, the Internet decided to stop waiting for Madonna, and everything went wrong: Her music was stolen and leaked; her hasty, emotional responses on Instagram used terms like "rape" and "terrorism," provoking (you guessed it) Internet outrage. Her swift solution was to put six songs online immediately, with a promise that 13 more would follow in March. But some of those 13 new songs have turned what might have been a modern-day pop treasure into a diamond struggling to escape the rough.

Rebel Heart is a long, passionate, self-referential meditation on losing love and finding purpose in chilling times. It's also a chance for the Queen of Pop to floss a bit and reflect on how she painstakingly carved a path others have happily twerked down in the years since her 1983 debut. The über-fit 56-year-old star gleefully enunciates "bitch" on the refreshing, reggae-tinged "Unapologetic Bitch" and the frenetic, Nicki Minaj-assisted "Bitch I'm Madonna," both featuring Diplo's ear-tingling airhorn blasts. She quotes herself on three songs, calling back to iconic passages from "Vogue" and "Justify My

Illustration by Frank Stockton

Love" before whisper-rapping about her past hits in "Veni Vidi Vici."

The album opens with another kind of flashback – the classic-sounding house jam "Living for Love," a buoyant song about moving on after a breakup. The stellar "HeartBreakCity," meanwhile, is a dramatic plunge into post-relationship hell. The singer grappled with her divorce from Guy Ritchie on her past two albums, but now that she's back on the market, there are new fools to smack down.

Her co-pilots this time aren't the electro mavens who assisted on 2012's glossy *MDNA* nor the pop titans who lent a hand on 2008's dancier *Hard Candy* – they're trendier talents like Blood Diamonds and established hitmakers like Kanye West. Sometimes these collaborations gel perfectly, like on "Illuminati," West's grimy take on the Internet's favorite conspiracy theory, and "Devil Pray," where Avicii helps Madonna revive the strums-and-beats vibe of 2000's *Music*. And Minaj's verse on "Bitch I'm Madonna" is pure fire.

Unfortunately, cameos from Nas, Chance the Rapper and Mike Tyson don't elevate their respective songs. And Madonna lets her own appetite for over-the-top sex songs run wild on a handful of cringy tracks like "Holy Water" (an ode to oral sex featuring the unfortunate line "Yeezus loves my pussy best") and "S.E.X.," which spells out an unconventional list of bedroom aids including "chopsticks, underwear, bar of soap, dental chair."

The album is at its strongest when Madonna shoves everyone to the side and just tells it to us straight. So it's fitting that she wraps up the deluxe edition with the title track, recalling how she went from weird kid to narcissist to spiritual thinker over Avicii's bright, orchestrated production. Deep down, Madonna does have a rebel heart – and you can't fault her for reminding us that pop music is all the better for it.

LISTEN NOW!
Hear key tracks from these albums at **RollingStone.com/albums**.

'Late' great: Drake

Drake's Surprise Attack: Fire From Up North

Toronto rapper polishes his crown on a 17-track set with few big hooks, but lots of attitude

Drake *If You're Reading This It's Too Late*
Cash Money/Young Money/Republic/OVO ★★★★

Is it an album? Is it a mixtape? Who cares? These 17 surprise-released tracks hit harder than most big-budget LPs. There's no radio single, and not many of the seductively sung hooks that rocketed the Toronto MC to fame. Instead, there are songs like "Star67," a sullen chomp at the hand that feeds him: "Brand-new Beretta, can't wait to let it go/Walk up in my label like, 'Where the check, though?'" It's hard to imagine the heads of Cash Money Records shmoney-dancing to that one. But for fans of Drake's singular aesthetic, it's manna from heaven, or at least Canada.

Musically, these songs are a deep soak in the sound he staked out on 2013's *Nothing Was the Same*. Trusted collaborators like Boi-1da cue up murky piano loops that leave plenty of room for Drake to go off. The brags are less humble, the threats more pointed: "Please do not speak to me like I'm that Drake from four years ago," he sneers on "No Tellin'." "I'm at a higher place." He's known for emotional openness, but this is the least vulnerability he's ever shown – at least until "You & the 6," a heartfelt tribute to his mother. It's one of Drake's best songs ever, but you might not notice it at first because he plays it so cool. For once, he doesn't sound like he wants to be remembered as one of the greats. He just is. SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON

KEY TRACKS: "Know Yourself," "Energy"

Kelly Clarkson

Piece by Piece RCA/19
★★★

Pop star takes it back to the Eighties, with totally big vocals

"Even if we wanted/You can't turn back the hands of time," Kelly Clarkson sings over the synth strut of the aptly titled "Nostalgic." But the OG American Idol manages to pull off that clock reversal, flooring her DeLorean back to the Eighties on her seventh studio album. She gets her Molly Ringwald on to "Heartbeat Song," the pulsating first single. On "Dance With Me," Clarkson channels her inner Pat Benatar over a "Where the Streets Have No Name" thump. Another highlight, "Invincible" (no relation to Benatar's 1985 hit), is a triumphant power ballad co-written by go-to pop-diva tunesmith Sia. When Clarkson hits that money note toward the end, big hair wins again. CHUCK ARNOLD

Big Sean

Dark Sky Paradise
G.O.O.D./Def Jam
★★★

Kanye protégé isn't a great MC yet, but he's getting warmer

Over four years, Detroit rapper Big Sean has made his biggest mark as the worst part of at least five Kanye West songs. His third and best album isn't going to get him recognized as a great artist, but he's one step closer. Sean's style here is a potent mix of other rappers' tics: He can do Drake's slow-crawl sadness ("Win Some, Lose Some"), Kanye's mix of politics and puns ("Tryna get that hotel money, but you know those crackers ain't gonna let you get the Ritz"), even a little Southern fast-rap (the awesome "Paradise"). His punchlines can be groaners ("I guess when your stars align/You do like the solar system and 'plan it' out"). But he's only getting better. CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN

JOSEPH OKPAKO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

Chris Brown and Tyga

Fan of a Fan: The Album

RCA/Young Money/Cash Money

★★

Rap and R&B bad boys team up for an adolescent romp

Chris Brown and Tyga present themselves as friends, but on their first full album together, they seem more like enablers. A true pal would have responded to lines like "She'll cook and clean, I got it made/ Handcuffed like she a slave" (from Tyga, on the narcissistic sex fantasy "Remember Me") with an intervention, not more studio time. Even clowns can make great music, though, and *Fan of a Fan* has its share of low-end R&B bangers. A drifting sample of the words "I need you" makes "Ayo" the most notable of these, hinting at the sort of vulnerability the rest of the record tries so desperately to conceal. **NICK MURRAY**

Natalie Prass

Natalie Prass

StarTime/Spacebomb

★★★½

A singer-songwriter with a taste for Seventies orchestration

Virginia singer-songwriter Natalie Prass has sung backup for Jenny Lewis, and there's more than a passing resemblance to Lewis in the sweet, sunny heartbreak songs on Prass' debut LP. But Prass' vocal style is cutesier, and she leans harder on her retro sensibilities: These songs would be at home in a smoky lounge circa 1973, from the horn-laced opener "My Baby Don't Understand Me" to the baroque-pop brooder "Christy." There's high drama in the arrangements, but they're playful, too. Then there's "It Is You" – a closing track so frilly and delicate it almost feels like a sendup of Prass' own Disney tendencies. **CADY DRELL**

Of Montreal

Aureate Gloom Polyvinyl

★★★

Indie-rock chameleon is all over the place, but never boring

Kevin Barnes' formal restlessness is his charm and flaw. It has made Of Montreal an ever-morphing, rarely boring indie-rock standby – but it can also find him riffling through random scraps like Macklemore in a Goodwill superstore. So goes Barnes' latest: Impressive disco-funk-glam couplings (the politically incensed "Bassem Sabry") rush the dance floor alongside Anglophile post-punk and classic-rock fractals (the Kinks-conjuring "Apollyon of Blue Room"). Sometimes his hydrant flow of ideas reveals a lack of good ones (see the proggy slog "Monolithic Egress"). But when Barnes figures out how to focus his brain dumps, dude gets more with less. **WILL HERMES**

Future Brown

Future Brown Warp

★★★★

Avant-garde producers convene next-level club summit

Missy Elliott's Super Bowl moment said plenty about hip-hop's current creative drought. This timely set from four style-hungry producers recalls Elliott's turn-of-the-century heyday, with post-national street beats and an army of fresh MCs and singers. It feels like a genuine next-generation moment. Dominican-American MC Maluca spits hot Spanish over a synthesized koto melody, dancehall queen Timberlee rides a sci-fi bounce, and grime vet Riko Dan flows basso profundo. Opening and closing the proceedings is rising Chicago bad girl Tink, sounding like Scarlett Johansson's *Her* character after too much digital tequila. This future looks good. **WILL HERMES**

ATLANTIC

LED ZEPPELIN

PHYSICAL GRAFFITI

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Kid Rock's Heartland Soul

The Kid's joyful 10th album is full of nostalgic memories and huge hooks

Kid Rock *First Kiss*
Top Dog/Warner Bros. ★★★★

"I got them red-blooded white-boy blues," Kid Rock sings. Now 44, he finds himself looking back wistfully, tracking the passage of time. He laments that "we can't fight this getting older" – but the LP's muscular rock & roll tells another story. The Kid has no intention of aging gracefully – happily, he's as ornery and open-hearted as ever.

First Kiss kicks off with the title track, a killer-hook echo of Bob Seger's "Night Moves" that memorializes early days rocking to "Tom Petty on the radio." Hank Williams Jr. stands proudly next to the Savior in the fiddle-and-organ ballad "Jesus and Bocephus." And depending on which piece of the Rock you prefer – sentimental or irascible – you get your choice of clean or explicit bonus tracks: a beautifully arranged breakup song titled either "Say Goodbye" (with affecting lyrics by Seger) or "FOAD" (short for "Fuck Off and Die," with bitter words by the Kid).

KEY TRACK: "First Kiss"

First Kiss presents few surprises, mostly because Kid Rock's journey from abrasive rap metal to unreconstructed heartland rock has landed him in a sweet spot: big guitars, big drums, big choruses and gravelly vocals. "I know what's right," he declares on the thumping "Ain't Enough Whiskey," and there's no arguing with music offered with this degree of energy, joy and conviction. **ANTHONY DECURTIS**

Grown-up kid: Rock

STEPHEN J. COHEN/GETTY IMAGES

Purity Ring
Another Eternity 4AD
★★★½

Enthralling synth dreams from Canada's saddest Beyoncé

"Meet me in the back shed/I'll be hanging up the knives," Purity Ring's Megan James sings on the Canadian duo's second album. Their music is as creepy and alluring as her invitation would suggest. Producer Corin Roddick crafts stark tracks that find a middle ground between lustrous synth pop and the plush, cavernous hip-hop of hot producers like Mike Will Made It – a sound that's perfectly suited to James' sensual, unburdening lyrics. On "Bodyache," a cracking beat and dreamy piano promise rapture as she sings about sweat, blood and tears, sounding like a half-heard confession from the darkest reaches of the club. **JON DOLAN**

Two irresistible flavors

Noel Gallagher's Psychedelic Thrills

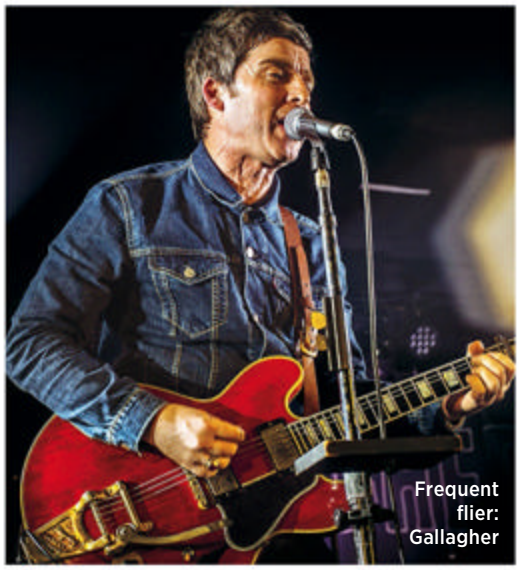
Ex-Oasis man has fun wrestling with the ghosts of pop's past

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds *Chasing Yesterday* Sour Mash
★★★½

You cannot accuse Noel Gallagher, the former singer-guitarist and domineering songwriter in Oasis, of lacking self-awareness. The title of his second album since that British band's implosion in 2009 gets right to Gallagher's stubbornly retrospective passions – anything by the Beatles; Seventies glam; the Eighties boom in paisley jangle, led in his native Manchester by the Smiths and Stone Roses – with a light swipe at anyone still pining for an Oasis reunion. Their savage charm is reprised here to satisfying effect in the stony "Lock All the Doors" and, with a twist of wry, "You Know We Can't Go Back."

KEY TRACK: "The Dying of the Light"

The greater appeal of *Chasing Yesterday* is in the way Gallagher, 47, now does reflection, loss and persistent optimism, leavening his usual power chords and pub-choir-ready choruses with a dusky, psychedelic churn that exposes the long, hidden thread running from early-Seventies Traffic to the Stone Roses' dazed 1989 shuffle "Fools Gold." "Riverman," "The Dying of the Light" and "The Right Stuff" are all rain, brooding and fragile promises, stretched under velvet-ripple Mellotrons at lonesome-stroll tempos. The words, for Gallagher, often seem like a way just to get from one vocal note to another while having fun with his elders. "Gonna try my best to get there/But I can't afford the bus fare," he sings in "The Dying of the Light," a line that sounds like it dodged a final edit. "Riverman" is almost a game of spot-the-precedent: a Nick Drake-like title, lyric drops of George Harrison and Bob Dylan.



Frequent flier: Gallagher

But step back from those details and enjoy the broader view: Gallagher's genuine talent for making gripping pop from elementary materials. In "Ballad of Mighty I," which features the Smiths' Johnny Marr on guitar, Gallagher sells his determination ("Wherever you run, I'll be on your tail") at a dark-disco gait with a hall-of-echoes vocal effect that keeps ringing in your head after the song is over. It's hardly rocket science. It is a great ride worth repeating.

DAVID FRICKE

LAWRENCE WATSON/REX FEATURES/AP IMAGES

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GURU TO THE STARS
Cusack plays a TV therapist with a hidden agenda.

A New Hollywood Babylon

The laughs stick in your throat in this satire of what's tainted in Tinseltown By Peter Travers

Maps to the Stars

Julianne Moore, John Cusack, Robert Pattinson

Directed by David Cronenberg

★★★½

HOLLYWOOD SUCKS! BUT wait, that's hardly fresh news. What does *Maps to the Stars* have to say to jack up our pulses for right the hell now? Screenwriter-novelist-actor Bruce Wagner wrote this thing back in the 1990s when he worked as a limo driver for the Beverly Hills Hotel and saw the cesspool of celebrity up close. Lucky for him, the world has only grown more superficial and fame-obsessed.

Lucky for us, *Maps to the Stars* is directed by Canadian virtuoso David Cronenberg, shooting in the U.S. for the first time and finding in Hollywood an ideal place to work out his feelings about body horror, a theme that has challenged him in films as diverse as *Scanners, The Fly, Dead Ringers, Naked Lunch* and *A Dangerous Method*. Cronenberg knows that the epicenter for fear of aging, and of a body breaking down, is Hollywood. It's a place where putting a pretty face on decay – physical and moral – is everyone's business. In fact, Dr. Stafford Weiss (John Cusack is slimeball perfection) has made a career as a TV shrink by preying on the angst of the rich and famous, even when he's having sex with them.

One of his clients is Havana Segrand, an actress determined not to go gentle into decline. As played with ferocious wit and wickedness by Julianne Moore, who won the Best Actress prize at Cannes for letting it rip, Havana is a nasty piece of work. Moore, in a 180-degree turn from her Oscar-saluted delicacy in *Still Alice,* delivers a tour de force of ego unleashed. Havana regularly drives assistants away, especially when she takes meetings on the throne of her toilet. On her cell to Carrie Fisher (as herself), Havana commands, "I need a new chore whore." It's one of the bons mots that pepper Wagner's script, in which anyone over 25 is referred to as "menopausal."

Moore wields a cell like a weapon.

Things take a grave turn when Havana hires Agatha (Mia Wasikowska) for chore-whore duty. Agatha, a pyromaniac, is badly scarred from an accident and has just been released from a Florida psychiatric facility. Perfect clay for Havana to mold. Agatha's friendship with Jerome (Robert Pattinson), a limo driver based on Wagner, is the one bright spot in the chamber of horrors she calls a life. It turns out the celeb guru is her dad. Her mother, Cristina (Olivia Williams), is a manager now in control of the burgeoning career of their 13-year-old son, Benjie (Evan Bird), a tantrum-throwing brat of Bieber proportions.

It's a lot to take in. And the script piles on secrets, lies and perversions, including incest, sexual abuse and murder. It's definitely overcrowding when ghosts show up to haunt Havana and Benjie. And yet the

FOCUS WORLD, 2

film works as a dark comic blast into the dazzle and depravity of Hollyweird. The great Cronenberg, with the help of gifted cinematographer Peter Suschitzky, keeps us locked to reality even as the film hurtles into the absurd. You can laugh with *Maps to the Stars,* but you can't laugh it off. Prepare to be knocked for a loop.

McFarland, USA

Kevin Costner

Directed by Niki Caro

★★½

CAN A WHITE COACH, PLAYED by Kevin Costner, turn a track team of poor, mostly Mexican-American kids into cross-country champions? Silly question. Would Disney make the movie otherwise? Inspiration is for sale in *McFarland, USA*. And though more than a spoonful of sugar is slathered over the fact-based script, the movie delivers as promised on the thrill of the race and the lump in the throat.

Costner is solid and persuasive as Jim White, a coach who gets fired in Idaho for being a hothead. So in 1987, he packs up his wife (Maria Bello) and two daughters (Morgan Saylor and Elsie Fisher) and accepts a lesser, lower-paying job teaching science and PE at McFarland High in California farm country. At first, the students don't cotton to this Mr. White gringo they call "Blanco." But then he persuades the principal (Valente Rodriguez) to let him start the school's first cross-country track team. The students aren't as easily influenced. They have jobs to do before and after school, grueling work that helps support their families. But when Blanco shows them how the stamina they've developed by picking crops under a blazing sun can be a useful tool in running, they're hooked.

So are we, thanks to the fleet direction of Niki Caro (*Whale Rider*) and no-bull performances by the boys, notably Carlos Pratts as the team's best runner and Ramiro Rodriguez as the worst. Along the way, *McFarland, USA* gives us a vital sense of hardscrabble lives and dreams of glory deferred. All cheers here are fully earned.

Focus

Will Smith, Margot Robbie

Directed by Glenn Ficarra and John Requa

★★½

I'M A SUCKER FOR CAPER movies in which impossibly clever con artists do impossibly dangerous things while looking impossibly gorgeous. I could feel *Focus* trying to be that caper. I'm not asking for nirvana, such as Hitchcock's *Notorious* or David O. Russell's *American Hustle,* just a taste of sexy escapism. A taste is all you get in *Focus*, but it'll do till the whole enchilada comes along.

Will Smith brings all his Slick Willie charm to the role of Nicky Spurgeon, a con man practically from the womb. Nicky and his crew can steal the tighty off your whities. His trick is to divert your focus so you won't know what hit you. Naturally, Nicky never lets anyone get close. Then Jess Barrett (Margot Robbie) enters the scene. This bombshell is a rookie at the game until Nicky gives her his master class.

Glenn Ficarra and John Requa (*Crazy, Stupid, Love*), who share writing and directing chores on *Focus,* are setting up a romance between two people who can never trust each other. It's a game that shows its hand way too early to take us in. But the two stars, looking glam as they traverse glam locales like New Orleans, New York and Buenos Aires, are dazzling distractions. Robbie is a wow and then some. The Aussie actress who made us sit up and take notice as Leonardo DiCaprio's wife in *The Wolf of Wall Street* shows a comic flair backed up with beauty and steel. Even when *Focus* fumbles, Robbie deals a winning hand.

(1) Coach Costner cheers his cross-country team in *McFarland, USA*. **(2)** Bride (Rivas) and groom (Gentile) pre-storm in *Wild Tales*. **(3)** Smith, Robbie get it on in *Focus*.

'71

Jack O'Connell

Directed by Yann Demange

★★★

THE TITLE REFERS TO 1971, the year when Gary Hook (Jack O'Connell), a private in the British army, finds himself stranded on the streets of Belfast. The situation leaves him a target for the warring forces of Catholic nationalists – who are embroiled in their own internal conflicts with the IRA and other radical insurgents – and Protestant loyalists.

In short, our boy Gary is in the shit. And *'71,* the hard-charging debut feature from TV director Yann Demange, makes us live every vivid, violent moment with him, the threat of death lurking at every turn. Director Paul Greengrass took a documentary approach to the same Troubles in 2002's *Bloody Sunday*. Demange's film, spiked by an outstanding, all-stops-out O'Connell, makes politics unnervingly personal. Too much? What else do you expect of a cinematic knockout punch that sends you reeling?

Wild Tales

Érica Rivas, Diego Gentile

Directed by Damián Szifron

★★★½

ARGENTINA'S NOMINEE FOR the foreign-film Oscar is wild in every sense of the word. This farce about revenge is feral, ferocious and gut-bustingly funny. Writer-director Damián Szifron hasn't made one film, he's made six, stitched together under one title and sent out to a world that may not be ready. Screw the pussies. *Wild Tales* is gleefully out for blood.

The opening tale, "Pasternak," is set on a jet where the passengers, strangers all, realize they've all done wrong by a guy named Pasternak. I won't spoil the fun, but this tale is as bug-fuck crazy as anything by Pedro Almodóvar, who co-produced the film.

The comedy takes on darker colors in "The Rats," in which a diner waitress (Julieta Zylberberg) finds herself serving the crook who drove her father to suicide. Ouch! In "Road to Hell," a snotty driver gives the finger to a redneck. Big mistake. "Bombita" stars Ricardo Darín, Argentina's shiniest star, as a demolition engineer who takes on a towing service and the demons of the DMV. *Booyah!*

There are few laughs in "The Deal," in which a rich man tries to pay off a gardener to take the rap for his hit-and-run brat of a son. But the fantastic final tale rectifies that. In "Till Death Do Us Part," set at a Jewish wedding to end all weddings, the bride (Érica Rivas, superb) and her cheating groom (Diego Gentile) turn marriage into gladiatorial slaughter. You'll laugh till it hurts. In *Wild Tales,* that's the point.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RON PHILLIPS/© DISNEY 2015; SONY PICTURES CLASSICS; FRANK MASI/WARNER BROS. PICTURES

[*Cont. from 41*] as yourself; in other words, no one is better than somebody else. He embraced all people, whether it was a beggar on the street or a prostitute, and he admonished a group of Jews who were not observing the precepts of the Torah. So he rattled a lot of people's cages.

A rebel heart, you might say.

He was a rebel heart for sure.

What do you make of Kanye West, who co-produced three of your new songs?

He's a brilliant madman. He can't help himself. Like, he doesn't have the same filters other people have. He has to blurt things out – he's always saying inappropriate stuff. But he also has brilliant ideas in the studio, if you can get him to pay attention long enough. He would come and go. He would drive me bonkers, because he's got so many things going on in his life. And this seemed to be the theme of my record, working with people who can't get off their phone, can't stop tweeting, can't focus and finish a song. It drove me crazy. I was, like, running around with a butterfly net. But I feel like the music business needs him, because everyone's become so politically correct, so safe. I don't always agree with the things he says or does – I don't always like his music, even. But he's a beautiful mess. I love him.

Do you see yourself in him at all, or an earlier version of yourself?

Not really.

You never jumped on stages.

Well, I think he takes award shows too seriously. I never got too engaged with who wins awards or not, because I don't honestly think it's that important. So that part of him I can't relate to. Like, what's the point of fighting for somebody to… like, "This person should have got it"? Don't come to an award show looking for justice!

You hung out with Taylor Swift at the Grammys – it occurred to me that by being sort of the anti-Madonna, she might be most like you. Your bellybutton was a big deal in the Eighties, and her thing was never showing hers.

On purpose? I wasn't aware of that. She has an opinion, and she's going against the norm. So in that respect, she is similar to me, yeah. And also, people just want to give her a hard time all the time because they think she's a goody-two-shoes, so of course I want to embrace her.

In some ways, any young female pop star can be seen as a sort of funhouse-mirror version of you. How do you process all that in your head?

There's a part of me that feels jealous, like, "Oh, it's so much easier now to be famous," or "It's so much easier to get your stuff out there." But on the other hand, it's also harder, because you don't get a chance to find out who you are as a performer without a huge audience. In my coming-of-age time, there was no Internet, no social networking, nothing. It was just show after show, hoping one day somebody would notice you. All of that time you put in develops you, and you're doing it anonymously. And that's really helpful, not only to your growth as an artist but also to your psyche, to your confidence about who you are. To be judged and be picked apart by the public when you're 18 years old, I don't envy those girls. It's too much.

On the flip side, it seems one of the only acceptable prejudices in pop writing, and in the world at large, is ageism.

It's the last great frontier, you know? We've fought the civil rights movement, we fought for gay rights. There's so much political correctness, where people would never dream of thinking of judging somebody because they're gay or because they're black or because they're Muslim or whatever. But it's still the one area where you can totally discriminate against somebody and talk shit, because of their age. Only females, though. Not males. So in that respect, we still live in a very sexist society.

> "Kanye takes awards too seriously. Don't come to award shows looking for justice!"

People tend to admire the physical efforts of Jagger and Springsteen – but it's different for you. That could be seen as a blatant double standard.

Yes, it's extremely blatant.

So do you just ignore it? How do you deal with it?

I don't ignore it. I take note. I think, "That's interesting." No one would dare to say a degrading remark on Instagram about someone being black or gay, but my age? Anybody and everybody would say something degrading to me. And I always think to myself, "What's the difference between that and racism, or any discrimination? They're judging me by my age. Why is that acceptable?" I don't understand. I'm trying to get my head around it. Because women, generally, when they reach a certain age, have accepted that they're not allowed to behave a certain way. But I don't follow the rules. I never did, and I'm not going to start.

So when, for example, your ass is out on the red carpet – is that deliberately flaunting the idea of what someone…

Yeah. "This is what a 56-year-old ass looks like, motherfuckers."

Well, I mean, that's what yours looks like. Perhaps not the average…

Well, you know what? It *could* be the average one day. That's the thing. When I did my *Sex* book, it wasn't the average. When I performed "Like a Virgin" on the MTV Awards and my dress went up and my ass was showing, it was considered a total scandal. It was never the average, and now it's the average. When I did *Truth or Dare* and the cameras followed me around, it was not the average. So if I have to be the person who opens the door for women to believe and understand and embrace the idea that they can be sexual and look good and be as relevant in their fifties or their sixties as they were in their twenties, then so be it.

In the lyrics of "Joan of Arc," you say, "Each time they take a photograph/I lose a part I can't get back," which sounds more like Sean Penn's old attitude to the press.

There are certain mystical belief systems that believe that taking pictures takes an aspect of the soul, but beyond that it's just the idea that once you're captured in a photograph, then a million presumptions are made of you, and you are forever frozen in that one moment, and you are perceived to be the embodiment of that moment, and that, of course, is an illusion.

And sometimes that moment ends up talking back to you, like in "Birdman," I guess.

Yes. [*Laughs*] Exactly. It's a paradox. I love being photographed, or I should say I love the art of photography. It's about people *taking* photographs of you, stealing them, and then presuming or assuming or captioning. Words can never be taken back, photographs can never be taken back, nothing can ever be taken back.

Do you think about mortality?

In some respects I will never die. Because art is immortal. What we leave behind and what we create – the energy that we put out into the world is eternal. The physical body is assembled just like a chair or a building or a flower, but the revolutions we start, the people we affect and inspire, that is eternal. So, in that respect, we do achieve immortality, and that makes me less fearful.

What do you want the next five or 10 years of your life to look like?

I want to keep growing and living life to the fullest for as long as I'm on this planet. I don't have a specific plan. I want to be a good mother, I want my children to thrive, I want to continue to grow as an artist. And I hope I will always have the ability to create art and live in a world where I can speak freely, and I can inspire people. I don't know what form that will take.

Are you open to falling in love again?

Definitely. Yeah.

That was a fast answer.

I don't doubt love for a second. I'm living for love, baby. Come on, listen to my songs!

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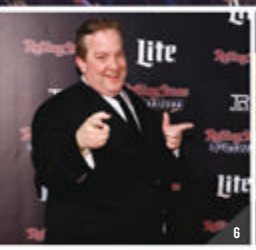

I) Showtime at The Venue Scottsdale. 2) Perry Farrell and Etty Lau. 3) David Spade and guest. 4) Craig Robinson. 5) Jeff Ross and guest. 6) Event host Jeff Beacher. 7) Aaron and Lauren Paul. 8-9) Bars and ice coolers stocked with Miller Lite as guests arrive. 10) Snake charmer captivates crowd. 11) Live tattoo administered in "The Steel Pony" lounge. 12) Guests at the *Cover of Rolling Stone* photo booth. 13) Electric dancers light up the room.

TR SPORTS

Photography: Gustavo Caballero, Taylor Hill, Chris Roque

FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS, Rolling Stone has hosted the most buzzed about party during the weekend of the big game. Rolling Stone LIVE in Arizona, presented by Miller Lite, continued the run of presenting show-stopping performances by the biggest names in music. DJ Cassidy was the first to take the stage with an amped up performance that shook The Venue Scottsdale to its core. Guests memorialized their night posing at the #itsmillertime *Cover of Rolling Stone* photo booth. Others were engaged by the live tattoo artist and snake charmers in "The Steel Pony" lounge. Soon, it was pop superstar Charli XCX's turn to take the room by storm, delivering a high-energy set punctuated with her hit "Boom Clap" and the new single "Doing It." Miller Lite, the original light beer, kept the crowd cool. But, the heat on this Arizona night reached its peak when rock god Steven Tyler took the stage. The prolific singer blasted through hit after hit, leaving everyone in the room mesmerized and making this, once again, the weekend's biggest show.

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TONY WRIGHT

[*Cont. from 49*] Williams conceded that "the new DNA prompted us to agree to a new trial," but said the state still has "considerable and compelling evidence against Mr. Wright that cannot be discounted through conspiracy theories and allegations of police misconduct." Williams then strangely called for Wright "to take a polygraph test," a methodology laughed out of most criminal courts years ago. "The National Academy of Sciences found that polygraph tests aren't viable or reliable, and the state of Pennsylvania determined they are inadmissible at trial, but the Philly DA's office thinks they're more probative than exhaustive DNA tests on rape-kit swabs and clothing?" said an incredulous Peter Neufeld, the co-founder of IP and Morrison's co-counsel in Wright's case. "Maybe they should fill Tony's pockets with rocks, then dunk him in the Schuylkill to see if he floats or sinks!"

As for the police department, there was a carefully worded statement acknowledging that "technology has revealed new information" about the investigation. Saying that the case is "under review," the department declined to respond to pointed questions about the work of the detectives named in this piece (none of whom responded to ROLLING STONE's phone calls for comment). If the DA's office truly means to retry Tony, his lawyers will first request a hearing on the admissibility of key portions of the state's evidence, including the statement Tony signed. At that hearing, the detectives will presumably be called on to explain how Tony could have copped to a brutal rape from which DNA has excluded him. They'll also have to explain, under oath and intense grilling, how clothes he never touched somehow came to appear in both his statement and his bedroom. Only this time, they won't be questioned by a court-appointed lawyer earning pennies for a murder case. Morrison and Neufeld have recruited Sam Silver and Rebecca Lacher, top litigators at Philadelphia law firm Schnader LLP, to handle any further proceedings. "Private clients pay millions for their talents," says Morrison. "Once the initial DNA tests came back, we knew we needed a strong and savvy team in a case as difficult as this."

Now guilty of nothing in the eyes of the law, Tony has been sitting in a county cell since last October. But he's glad, at least, to be back in Philly, where the people who love him – Tony Jr. chief among them – are just a half-hour's drive for visits. It's been a long, hard road for both Tony Wrights: Tony Jr. bounced from house to house, much as his father did. But he found mentors in church who nursed him through high school and, eventually, to college in Florida. He came back to Philly and landed a job working with troubled kids. This spring, he and his fiancée expect the birth of their first child, a girl. They're hoping against hope that Tony Sr. will be there to witness her birth.

They don't much look alike, these two who share a name: Junior, a genial, pillow-cheeked giant, has five inches and 50 pounds on his old man. But there's grace in both of them, and the field-tested patience of men who've seen the worst and outlived it. You don't escape the snares of North Philly if there isn't something different in your wiring. It takes nerve to insist that your life has value in a place that shorts it at birth, and nerve to declare that the truth still matters after the lies of policemen robbed you blind. Nothing will make right the wrong they did you: no settlement from the city, no apology from the mayor, no punishment of those men for their crime. There are untold Tony Wrights in every city in this country, men with the bad luck to be poor and black when they encountered dishonest cops. We need to hear their stories, and to rethink the war that put so many of them behind bars. If that sounds like heavy lifting, well, they're prepared to be patient. They have nothing on their hands but time.

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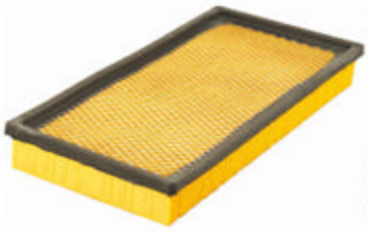
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RS 189 JUNE 19TH, 1975

Stevie Wonder, Fulfilled

The day before he would play Madison Square Garden while on tour in support of his 1974 album, *Fulfillingness' First Finale,* Stevie Wonder sat in a Manhattan hotel surrounded by instruments and recording equipment, complaining about the unkempt room ("Blind people are messy," he said) and sparring with a reporter from a black newspaper about his social responsibilities as a performer. "I'm not a politician or a minister," said Wonder as ROLLING STONE writer O'Connell Driscoll watched, "but at the same time I can enlighten a little." (The photo above was taken later at a Harlem theater.) For the cover image, RS turned to famous graphic artist Milton Glaser, best known for designing the "I Love New York" heart logo. "I decided to step away from a more accurate portrait and make it expressionistic and psychedelic," says Glaser, who is now 85. "I wanted it to convey the intensity of his music."

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[2]Starting at $21,795 MSRP plus $880 destination (Alaska $925) for 2016 Mazda CX-5 Sport FWD with manual transmission. 2016 Mazda CX-5 Grand Touring FWD model with Technology Package shown, $30,025 MSRP plus $880 destination (Alaska $925). MSRP excludes taxes, title and license fees. Actual dealer price will vary. See dealer for complete details.